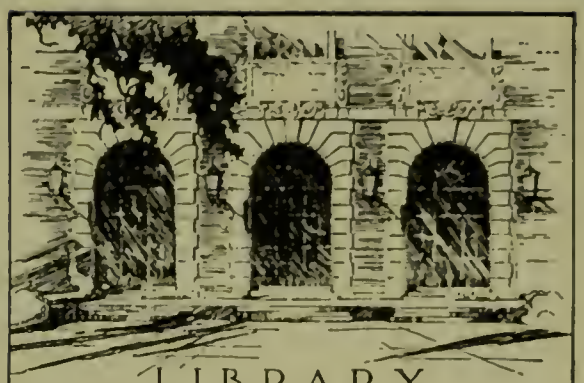
TWO LILIES

Julia Kavanagh



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TWO LILIES.

VOL. III.

TWO LILIES.

BY

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AUTHOR OF

"NATHALIE," "ADELE," "JOHN DORRIEN,"

&c., &c.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. III.

LONDON:
HURST AND BLACKETT, PUBLISHERS,
13, GREAT MARLBOROUGH STREET.
1877.

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LONDON:
PRINTED BY DUNCAN MACDONALD, BLENHEIM HOUSE,
BLENHEIM STREET, OXFORD STREET.

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TWO LILIES.

CHAPTER I.

THUS did the wayward breath of fate seem to drift once more the fortunes of Edward Graham towards the shores of Saint Aubin. He yielded to circumstances, but he did so without fear or regret, with something, indeed, of a vanquished man's eagerness to fight over again the old battle on the old battle-field, where he had been so cruelly and so unjustly defeated. In his heart he found that he panted for that revenge of success which is so dear to wounded pride, and which, alas! is so rare in the experience of the unfortunate. To fall once seems to doom a man to fall again and again, to fail in the beginning is like taking a lease of many a bitter defeat. But Edward Graham was still

young and sanguine, and he neither could nor would doubt that he should succeed in the end. Scarcely exchanging a word, the two men walked through the Basse-ville to the late Monsieur Duhamel's villa. It stood on the outskirts of the town, with a pleasant flower-garden in front, and a green orchard behind, a cheerful abode, but scarcely one in which a young man would care to live alone.

Mr. Graham remembered once passing by the place with Lily Scot, and saying to her, "We must try to have something like that, must we not?" And he recollected her sweet, shy smile, and modest look of grateful affection; and now that the pretty dwelling, with its cheerful rooms, was to be his, he had lost her, and all the promises of love. That is so hard in life, though in youth we do not realise it. It is not that we never get what the fair traitress Hope promises so liberally to our eager desires, it is that she dispenses her gifts one by one, and seldom or never when we can enjoy them in their fulness. That pretty cage which Edward Graham had longed for to place his darling bird in might be his now, but the bird was estranged, and, saddest of all, he wished for it no more.

"I suppose it must always be so," he thought, with a sigh, as Mr. Lennard, taking the key out of his pocket, opened the door and let him in; "but the more's the pity."

"The rooms are not amiss," said Mr. Lennard, throwing a window open, and letting in the morning sun; "and the furniture, though plain, is good. You can go and look at the bed-rooms upstairs. You will find me in the orchard."

Edward Graham merely gave a look to the upper rooms, then joined Mr. Lennard, who was walking rapidly under the pear and apple-trees, and now and then stretching out his hand to pick some of the dead man's fruit.

"Well, does the house suit you?" he asked, without looking at Edward Graham.

"The house suits me well enough. What about the terms?"

"Ah! what about the terms? Monsieur Duhamel's *beurré* beats mine. Well, suppose we say twelve hundred francs, forty-eight pounds a year; or, if you like, ninety-six pounds, which I shall deduct from the four hundred."

"That is a very strange way of doing business, Mr. Lennard."

"Very," replied Mr. Lennard, with perfect

candour. "But then this is a peculiar transaction altogether. I give you, in reality, Monsieur Duhamel's shoes for nothing. I let you have his house, furniture, and all, at a moderate price. I must have some security that my late wife's nieces do not lose through my good nature—eh?" And he laid his finger to his nose, and gave Mr. Graham one of his boring looks.

"Very well," answered the young man, carelessly; "it makes very little difference to me. You will acknowledge the receipt of two years' rent, give me three hundred and four pounds in ready money, and there will be no need of any further transactions between us until the two years are out."

"Just so," said Mr. Lennard, drily; "only when do you mean to take possession? This afternoon?"

"I must go to England first, and settle some little matters there, Mr. Lennard."

"And you will be back?" said Mr. Lennard, interrogatively.

"This day week at the latest."

Mr. Lennard looked by no means pleased at the delay.

"And suppose I should change my mind?" he suggested, tauntingly.

"You are quite free to do so," was the composed reply.

Edward Graham would have scorned to exact a pledge from Mr. Lennard, for he had no faith in his honour, and he felt he could trust implicitly to his passions. He felt, too, though he did not say so, the urgency of taking time by the forelock; but for his aunt, he would have left Saint Aubin that very morning, in order to return the more speedily, and step into those shoes of Monsieur Duhamel which Mr. Lennard's capricious and revengeful feelings had so unexpectedly put before his feet.

Mr. Lennard was silent till they left the house. When he had locked the door and put the key in his pocket, he looked at his companion, and said significantly—

"Mr. Graham, take my advice—come back without loss of time. I *might* change my mind. My good-for-nothing nephew, Dick Cowper, might like the late Monsieur Duhamel's shoes."

"And would you give him Miss Bertram's four hundred pounds?" asked Edward Graham, derisively. "No! Well, then, Mr. Lennard, the late Monsieur Duhamel's shoes are worth very little without that. I believe your way

lies in that direction; mine is in this. Good morning, Mr. Lennard."

He raised his hat with grave politeness, and walked away without looking back. Mr. Lennard stared after him, then laughed aloud, and went his way, shaking his head over it all.

Edward Graham stayed within the whole day, but Mr. Lennard made no sign. His aunt sent him word that her cold was better, and that she would leave with him the next morning. She kept her word, and they met in the yard of the inn, where the car stood waiting for the travellers. They had not been able to secure the *coupé*, and had to sit in the interior with three peasant women strung with baskets and parcels, and an old Norman in a blue blouse and white nightcap.

"How is your cold, aunt?" asked Edward Graham, struck with the disturbed expression of his aunt's face. "You do not look well."

Mrs. Graham protested that she was quite well, but with many nods and heavy sighs declared that it was something else—something quite different. She would tell him in Dieppe. She would rather not talk about it now.

"The good old soul has been taking my part

—or Lily's part—with Mrs. Scot and her daughter, and there has been a difference," thought Edward Graham. "God bless her! She will never be able to see wrong done and hold her tongue."

"I fear, auntie, your news are not pleasant," he said, cheerfully. "I, too, have a piece of news for you."

"Good news for you, Ned!" said she, suddenly brightening up.

"I hope so, auntie. I will tell you later."

Mrs. Graham nodded sagaciously, and looking at her neighbours, remarked mysteriously that the natives of this part of France were very sly, and might understand more than they pretended. "Do you think, for instance," she added, in a perfectly distinct voice, "that this old gentleman in the nightcap is really asleep? I think he is only pretending."

"And do you think he understands English, auntie?" asked Edward Graham, much amused.

"I should not wonder if he did," cried Mrs. Graham at the pitch of her voice, so that the old man gave a start, stared around him, then burst out into a low chuckle, which thoroughly disconcerted Mrs. Graham, who, being the soul

of good-nature, was suddenly distressed at the thought of having hurt his feelings.

"Pas possible de comprendre un mot de leur baragouinage," said the old gentleman, nudging the woman next him, who drew back with a a prudish air.

"My goodness! what does he say?" cried Mrs. Graham, in a flurry. "I hope he is not affronted."

"No, aunt; he declares he cannot understand a word of our gibberish."

"Why, it is their talk that is gibberish," said Mrs. Graham, rather indignantly.

"Of course it is, auntie. The mote and the beam hold good in this as in many another case."

The rest of their journey was uneventful, but Edward Graham noticed with concern that his aunt's kind face relapsed into its previous gloom, and never cleared until they alighted from the car, and went into a quiet hotel. The room they were shown into was on the ground-floor, and looked out on the quay. They could see the people passing by, and waggons heavily laden going to the railway-station, and the boat they were to cross in, and a line of blue

sea water shining in the sun they saw too.

"I think I will sit with my back to it," said Mrs. Graham, shuddering at the sight of her enemy.

"Do, auntie; and now you can tell me what has happened."

Mrs. Graham's face became clouded once more.

"Oh! such a terrible affair, but it is a relief to talk about it. Little Lily Bertram has run away."

The journey had made Edward Graham thirsty, but on hearing this he put down his glass untasted.

"Run away!—with whom?" he asked, after a pause.

"No one knows; but a gardener, who had worked for Mr. Bertram many years, left Saint Aubin last night for Héronville, where Miss Bertram's cousins on her mother's side are all living, and it is supposed she went off with him to them. Mr. Lennard never found it out till this morning, and he started for Héronville at once. Poor little thing!—I fear he will be very unkind when he catches her."

"I fear so too," said Edward Graham, much

disturbed. He was sorry for Miss Bertram, but he also felt uneasy on his own account. "You do not think she is gone to England to Miss Cowper's?" he said, after a while.

"My dear boy, how could the child go to England alone?" answered Mrs. Graham, staring. "And then they are all so unkind to the poor little thing. Mrs. Petherick comes rushing in with the news, and Mrs. Scot flies into a rage, and calls her an ungrateful monkey, as if the poor child had anything to be grateful about! and Lily Scot—why, Lily herself all but loses her temper when I take the child's part, and says in a heat that she is a very forward girl, and that most probably William Lennard has abetted her, for it seems he, too, is missing; and, after all, perhaps she has run off with him."

"Why should she, auntie?" drily asked Edward Graham.

"Well, yes; and I said so. I said to Lily, 'My dear, I daresay Mr. Lennard would only be too glad if little Miss Bertram, who is an heiress and a pretty girl, were to run off with his nephew.' And Lily coloured up, and her eyes quite flashed, she was so angry; and—

and I am warm, you know, and so our parting was not as pleasant as it ought to have been. I daresay it was all my fault," added Mrs. Graham, rubbing her nose.

"And is nothing else known?"

"Nothing; save that her bed was not slept in."

"And does no one suspect that she may have gone to England?"

"Oh! no. I said to Lily, 'Don't you think, dear, she may have gone to Miss Cowper's?' But Lily answered, 'Do you think Miss Cowper would have her?' So I saw by that she knew nothing."

Miss Scot knew more than Mrs. Graham gave her credit for. She knew of Miss Cowper's letter, and had read it, and had heard Miss Bertram protest that she would go to that lady; but she knew too how to keep her own counsel, and in her heart she was not sorry that Miss Bertram should be out of the way.

Edward Graham was very silent during the rest of the meal—he could not help wondering if Miss Bertram's flight would affect his new prospects; and if so, how far? His aunt had forgotten that he had something to tell her,

and he did not renew the subject. Mrs. Graham, whose gloomy looks had returned, said not one word until, as dinner was nearly ended, she broke out with—

"He has such a bad look."

"Who has, auntie?"

"Mr. Lennard. I wish she were out of his hands, Ned."

"I wish she had never been in them, aunt. Will you take a walk?"

"I can't, Ned—I can't get that poor child out of my head. I must write to Lily Scot, and tell her to let me know all about poor little Lily Bertram. I shall not be able to sleep for thinking of her. I shall always see that wicked little man catching her."

Edward Graham did not answer. He pushed back his chair, and was rising to go, when his eyes, which were gazing abstractedly through the window before him, suddenly took a startled look. A peasant girl, in a long black cloak, with a little bundle in her hand, was looking in at them through the panes. Surely that pale face under the black hood was one he knew.

"Aunt," said he, quietly, "turn round and tell me who it is that is looking in at us."

Mrs. Graham did as she was bid, and whilst she clasped her hand and uttered a startled cry, Edward Graham went to the door, and opening it, let Miss Bertram in.

"Lily," said Mrs. Graham, rising so abruptly that her chair fell back—"Lily, my poor child, is it you?"

"I have run away," said Lily. "I am going to England, to Miss Cowper. Will you let me go with you, Mrs. Graham?"

It was to her that she spoke, but at Edward Graham that she looked. His heart ached at that wistful, pleading look. Every manly impulse in his bosom awoke and went towards her, as, without giving his aunt time to reply, he held out his hand and said, "Yes, Lily, we will take you."

"Of course we will!" cried Mrs. Graham, hysterically. "And, oh! Edward, do tell them to give the child some dinner; and let us make haste and be gone."

Mr. Graham obeyed. He was not so much surprised. He had in some sort expected it all along. He had felt that this trouble was wanting to complete the rest. He ordered dinner for Lily, and left her with his aunt whilst he

went and secured an extra berth for her. When he came back, Mrs. Graham met him with outstretched arms and tearful eyes.

"Oh! Ned," she said half laughing, half crying, "you would never guess how she came! Why, she came in the car with us, or rather upon it. She sat on the top under that big hood of a thing, and the driver knew her, though she wore a peasant's dress; but, God bless him, he would not betray the child, and she was in Saint Aubin last night, but you are not to ask where, for she is not to tell, and here she is, whilst Mr. Lennard is running off to Héronville, and she travelled like a little Norman peasant, with a white cap and all, and gave us such a start—God bless her!"

All this time Lily was looking at Mr. Graham with a sad, wistful smile, though she said not a word.

"How old are you, Miss Bertram?" he asked, rather gravely.

"I shall soon be eighteen," she answered.

"Then you will have to wait three years before you are free," said he, and his look rested kindly on the pale, sad girl who still looked such a child.

They soon went on board, and soon were out at sea. The weather was calm and fair, but it was night when they reached London. Edward Graham drove home with his aunt and Lily to Hammersmith. He alighted first, and helped his aunt to come down. When she stood on the pavement, she said to him,

"The poor little thing is done up; she has fallen asleep."

He looked in and saw her pale face, on which the gaslight shone. It was sad, even in slumber, and tears were still lying on her cheek.

"Poor little thing," he half sighed, "she cannot help it, but it is hard," for he thought of Mr. Lennard and what his wrath would be, and how his chance of success was once more over.

"Ned," called back his aunt as he was turning away, economically walking home, "what were those good news you were to tell me?"

"They have not crossed the sea, aunt," he answered. "Good night, God bless you, Lily."

And Mr. Graham was right; two days later there came a furious letter from Mr. Lennard, which the young man was wise enough not to answer.

CHAPTER II.

"NOW mind you come and dine with us to-morrow—no, the day after," Mrs. Graham said to her nephew before they parted.

"Very well, auntie," he had answered, and faithful to the appointment, he went to Hammersmith the next day but one. It happened to be a Monday, and ever afterwards Edward Graham, in that secret autobiography which we all keep, called it Memorable Monday. In the morning came Mr. Lennard's letter. That was expected, yet trying, especially when casting up his accounts with an anxious brow, Edward Graham looked at the bare and desolate road before him, and far as he might gaze, nothing less bleak appeared to cheer him now.

Perhaps it was natural that when, on reach-

ing his aunt's house that evening, that good lady welcomed him with a dismayed "Oh! Ned, she's gone," perhaps we say it was natural that Edward Graham should not feel much disappointed. Lily had always cost him rather dear, and though he was not so ungenerous as to resent it, he could not forget it either. So it was very calmly that he said,

"She has not run away, I hope?"

"Run away! oh, no; but Miss Cowper came and fetched her this morning. I begged hard to keep her till to-morrow, but Miss Cowper would not hear of it; and when shall we see her again?" despondently added Mrs. Graham.

Mr. Graham looked as if he could bear the loss of Lily's society, but he was silent.

"It seems Miss Cowper is going to travel, and as of course she cannot take Lily, she will put her into a convent—oh! so far away. I wanted to keep the child, but Miss Cowper became so grand and said Miss Bertram was confided to her by the late Mr. Bertram, and so on, that she silenced me. Lily, too, though she looked wistfully at me, said it was her papa's wish, and there was an end of it all, and the girl was gone. Poor little Lily! I do not suppose

Mr. Lennard can come and take her away."

"It is not likely, aunt. He was her guardian according to French, but not by English law."

"True. Ned, the man must be savage."

"Yes, aunt, he must." And Edward Graham remembered the morning's letter.

"And if he could do us any injury he would," continued Mrs. Graham.

"We need not doubt that, aunt."

"But then he may not know where Lily Bertram is."

"Oh! yes, aunt, he does. And concealment being useless, Mr. Graham showed his aunt Mr. Lennard's letter, and explained its purport.

"My dear boy," said Mrs. Graham, pitifully—"my poor boy, that is hard!" And she clasped her hands, and looked at him with much sorrow.

"Auntie," said he, lightly, "you promised me my dinner, and I am getting quite hungry."

But though dinner was brought in at once, though Mrs. Graham did her best to be hospitable, she could not recover from the depression brought on by her nephew's confession.

"I know I am the cause of it all," she said, gloomily. "If I had discouraged the child, she

would not have run away and joined us. It is all my doing. To lose such a chance as that of Monsieur Duhamel's shoes! And I daresay you would have married Lily Scot too."

"I do not think so, aunt," he answered, coldly.

"And I who told you Lily Bertram was the gold thread in your life," persisted Mrs. Graham. "Why, she has proved the blackest of black threads, poor little innocent! Ned, Ned, it is very good of you to forgive me, but I don't deserve it. You warned me against it, but I would have my own way; I would bring it all on. My poor boy, I must do something. You must let me give you money, and I must talk to Mrs. Fay, and tell her to make you build something or other for her."

"Auntie," he interrupted, laying his hand on her arm, and speaking rather gravely, "do not talk of giving me more money, or I shall think myself a doomed man, destined to hang upon you. As to Mrs. Fay, please let her alone. She is rich, but I daresay she is like Miss Cowper with her almshouses."

"But Mr. Blake," cried Mrs. Graham, brighten-

ing, "you spoke of a Mr. Blake in Saint Aubin."

"Yes, auntie, and he is gone to the Continent, and will come back Heaven knows when! Come, auntie, do not look tragic. It is a long lane that has no turning!"

He spoke hopefully and did his best to comfort her. He partly succeeded, but when they parted, and he walked home under a starry sky, meeting the chill breath of the September evening, his own thoughts were dark enough.

"I am twenty-eight," thought he, "and I owe two hundred pounds, and can barely earn my bread. It is time there should be a change, for surely the lane is a long one."

So spake Despondency; but Hope, though unheeded, was close by all the time, her hand upon the gate that was going to open a new path before Edward Graham, a path that went no longer through arid wastes, but which wound through bounteous shade and sweet waters to a fair city bathed in golden light.

As the young man reached his own door, and let himself in with a latch-key, a man in the passage was hurrying out, followed by Mrs. Rawlings.

"Why, there he is!" she cried. "Oh! Mr. Graham, a telegram for you, sir, on the parlour table, sir." And she bustled in with him, and stood looking in his face as he tore the envelope open.

"No bad news, sir, I hope?" said Mrs. Rawlings. "Ever since I got a telegram telling me there had been a fire in the house, and that all the window-curtains were burned to a cinder—that was not in the telegram, but I found it out when I came back—ever since then the mere sight of those envelopes gives me quite a turn."

"No, not bad news, thank you," said Edward Graham, briefly. "I am going out of town for some time, Mrs. Rawlings, and I see"—looking at his watch—"I have no time to lose to catch the train. I leave you my keys, as I shall probably trouble you to send me down some things. If any letters or messages come, you will kindly forward them at once to this direction. Good night, Mrs. Rawlings."

"And when will you be back, sir?" asked Mrs. Rawlings, following him to the door.

"I cannot say, Mrs. Rawlings."

An empty cab was passing by, he hailed it,

got in, and it was over. Mrs. Rawlings, rather bewildered, and indeed rather uneasy, went back to the parlour, and spying the telegraphic message on the floor, picked it up and read its brief contents without scruple, for since the people at the telegraphic office knew all about it, why might not she? The message was from J. P. Blake, Blake House, and ran thus: "Come at once. House in danger."

"I declare a breath would have knocked me down," said Mrs. Rawlings, when relating this incident to her married daughter. "When I thought of the house tumbling down, and the poor creatures in it, I felt so faint that I could scarcely stand."

Blake House was indeed in some peril, thanks to Mr. Blake. Mr. Blake had intended going to the Continent; Mr. Blake had changed his mind at the eleventh hour; Mr. Blake suddenly discovering that Mr. Graham was not his man, and that he (Mr. Blake) had a genius for architecture, had gone on with the repairs of Blake House after a fashion of his own. The result was that "house-in-danger" message which had given Mrs. Rawlings a turn, and sent off Edward Graham on an unexpected journey.

The young architect, on his arrival, found Mr. Blake both alarmed and penitent. Mr. Blake was also in mortal dread of ridicule. He knew that if the world got hold of so good a story as his turning amateur builder and architect, and thereby endangering the safety of his ancestral mansion, the world which, as we know, is a good-natured world, would never let it go again, but would shake it at him vauntingly till the day of his death. Mr. Blake was therefore in a state of abject fear, which Edward Graham saw through, and did his best to dispel by hinting quietly that he made it a rule never to talk on professional matters. Mr. Blake's spirits rose on the assurance. He did not thank Edward Graham, but he shook hands with him, and said cheerfully,

"Well, Mr. Graham, suppose we do not go in merely for repairs, which are always odious, but for a new wing, eh?"

"I am not sure that it is wanted," honestly said Mr. Graham.

"Yes, yes it is," hastily replied Mr. Blake, who longed to destroy every trace of his handiwork. "We will see about it to-morrow morning."

And the next morning they both looked at the grey old house, in the mild September sunshine, and the new wing was decreed forthwith.

"But he may slip through my fingers yet," thought Edward Graham, who could not believe in so much good fortune. And such indeed might have been the case, but for Mr. Blake's lurking fear of having his delinquencies revealed. "If I let him go he will tell everyone about it," thought Mr. Blake. So not to let Edward Graham go, he made work for him. When the weather interfered with the new wing, Mr. Blake discovered that the interior of Blake House wanted renovating. The picture-gallery was all wrong. The ball-room was too low. In vain Mr. Graham, who was honest, protested against this waste of time and money; Mr. Blake, who only became more resolute when he was opposed, had his way. So passed the Winter. In Spring the new wing was finished, and Mr. Graham, nothing loth, escaped from Mr. Blake and came back to London. He had run down two or three times, spite Mr. Blake, on other business which he had refused to neglect; but his visits had been brief and unex-

pected, and though he had made the attempt, he had not been able to see his aunt once. The moment he got home he wrote to her:

"DEAR AUNTIE,

"If you will have me to-morrow (Saturday), I shall be very glad to dine with you at the usual hour.

"Your affectionate nephew,

"EDWARD GRAHAM."

"The dear boy!" cried Mrs. Graham, overjoyed, as she read this note. "Cook, Mr. Graham is coming to dine with me to-morrow. Mind we have his favourite cabinet-pudding; and—let me see—yes, he likes lamb. We will have lamb and his Julienne soup; and I daresay something else," meditatively added Mrs. Graham, for woman-like, her first thought was to feed her nephew. Mrs. Graham's second thoughts were not expressed aloud. "I wonder how he is getting on with that Mr. Blake," said Mrs. Graham to herself. "He never said much in his letters. I daresay not well—I daresay not well. Ah! if he would only let me give him some money—bad boy!"

So full was Mrs. Graham of these thoughts,

that when the next day came and six o'clock brought Edward Graham's knock at the door, and his tall form and olive face in Mrs. Graham's parlour, they gave their own hue to her welcome.

"My dear boy, I am glad to see you," she cried, giving him a hearty kiss and a warm pressure of the hand. "And I am sure that Mr. Blake has worried you and not behaved well; and you must let me help you," said Mrs. Graham, with a tear in her eye. "If you had married Lily Bertram, it would all have been well; but as you did not, and she ran away, and only brought new trouble, and it was my fault, you really must let me help you—just for a while.

"Auntie," cried Mr. Graham, amazed, "what do you mean?" And, placing his two hands on Mrs. Graham's shoulders, he looked down in her face. "Mr. Blake has not worried me at all," he resumed; "and he has behaved splendidly, and swears by me, and thinks there is not another man like me in the United Kingdom; and if I had married Lily Bertram, poor child! it must have been for her money, you know; and by running away, she rendered me

a great service, for if I had stepped into Monsieur Duhamel's shoes, and taken the four hundred pounds, I should not be what I am now—please Heaven!—a made man."

"A made man!" repeated Mrs. Graham, vaguely.

"What do you think of that, auntie?" said he, taking a bundle of bank-notes out of his pocket, and putting two in her hand. "All a hundred pounds each, auntie. And you want to help me, do you? Why, it is I who am going to help you with your charities. Mind you put me down for something handsome."

Mrs. Graham looked at his smiling face, at the notes in her hand, at the little bundle which he flourished before her eyes, and she was beginning to cry for joy, when she thought better of it and laughed.

"My dear boy," said she, delighted, "I am so happy! And you look so well—quite handsome, Ned! I ought to have seen it at once. Of course you are a made man. God bless that good Mr. Blake! And I have got your cabinet pudding, you saucy boy, and your Julienne soup, and let us have our dinner."

The dinner was a good one, and Edward

Graham did it justice. He was floating on that wave of success which makes a man feel so light and buoyant. Never, since the days when he was a schoolboy, or since that time when he was engaged to Lily Scot, and was building Mr. Bertram's turret, had Mr. Graham been in such good spirits as he was now. His aunt wondered what he thought of the past, and what he would feel if he knew that Lily Scot was engaged to William Lennard; but she wisely forbore to put the question. "There are many dead besides those that sleep in their graves," thought Mrs. Graham, with a sigh, "and we must let them be—we must let them be."

CHAPTER III.

THE happy years of life glide by like smooth waters. No rocks, no drifting trees, which the storm tore up root and branch, impede their course, and fill them with wrath and foam. They flow calmly on through shade and sunshine, and take no record of time. So was it now with Edward Graham. He had said no more than the truth when he had told his aunt that he was a made man. He had not achieved greatness, which is the lot of few. He could not boast of wealth, which professional men rarely attain; but Blake House, and especially Mr. Blake, made him widely known. He had a good position, as the world goes, and he earned a fair competency by congenial labour.

The life he led was after his own heart, for it was fully occupied, and to himself deeply inter-

esting. As a story, however, it was uneventful. He had his anxieties and his cares, but they were neither long nor deep. When they were over, it was fair weather again; and when other troubles came, they were of the same slight and transitory nature as the first had been. Never more did he go through the terrible ordeal which had attended his great effort at Saint Aubin; never again did failure wear so cruel an aspect; and, above all, never had his feelings to be involved in purely professional matters. He earned money—he spent it, not extravagantly, but freely. He took pleasure in moderation. He travelled, but shunned the Norman coast. He saw famous old cities, which had been the dream of his boyhood; he enjoyed life, but he worked hard, and lived alone, and so reached the age of thirty-one.

It was more Edward Graham's misfortune than his fault that he had no bosom friend. His education had been a home one, for many years, at least, and so he had missed one of the great blessings of youth—its pleasant ties and happy companionship. So far as friendship went, his life was cold. He had but one true affection to give it warmth—his tenderness for

his aunt, Mrs. Graham. She had become somewhat infirm and sedentary of late, and once or twice a week Edward Graham spent part of the evening with her. "Like a good boy," as Mrs. Graham said. Sometimes he stayed a few minutes only—sometimes he remained two or three hours, but come to her he must. She was to him that sweet water without which life would be too parched and dry.

We know so little about ourselves, that Mr. Graham did not know this. "I cannot forsake the dear old soul, who has been so kind to me," he would say to himself, as his cab drove up to her door. And when he saw her kind face brighten, and felt his own heart warm in his bosom as he sat down in the chair facing hers, he did not know that he received even more than he gave in the exchange of love between them. She had her poor to feed, her vagrants to reclaim, her stray dogs even to shelter; but if Mr. Graham had questioned his own heart, he would have found that in his life of hard work, intellectual pleasures, and worldly pursuits, the love he bore his old aunt was the only gleam of sunshine.

Thus it was that, one evening in late Spring,

he rushed into her parlour, after a hard day's work, tired, yet as pleased as a schoolboy who has thrown down his books, and means to luxuriate in idleness.

"Now, auntie, a cup of your best tea, if you please," said he, throwing himself down in the chair that was devoted to his use.

From her chair, facing his, Mrs. Graham looked at him complacently. Good-fortune becomes most men; it clears the brow, it opens the look, and gives a genial meaning to the countenance. Edward Graham's Italian face had lost that habitual severity which had characterised it some years before this time. Gravity was still its prevailing aspect, but a gravity tempered by quiet good-humour.

"You're a bonnie fellow," thought Mrs. Graham, "but perhaps you know it, so I'll not tell you. A cup of tea?" she said aloud—"is it a cup, or ten, Ned?"

"Auntie, don't be satirical. You don't know how delicious a cup of tea tastes after work; and if one cup be delicious, why not ten?"

Mrs. Graham did not answer, but whilst her nephew was drinking the tea she had poured out for him, she puckered up her forehead into

many wrinkles, and looking meditatively at the fire—for though it was not cold, she felt chilly, and liked a mild glow—she rubbed her nose slowly, then said, with her usual suddenness:

"Ned, you earn a good deal of money now—do you spend it all?"

"I am afraid I do, but if you want any for your poor people, auntie——" said he, putting his hand in his pocket.

"No, no," she interrupted, "that is not it. Ned, you should save—you should marry."

"Well, I daresay I shall some day, auntie."

"Then why not now? Where's the use of waiting to get a sour old bachelor of forty?"

"Thank you, auntie. Another cup of tea *en attendant.* That's three."

"Where's the use of waiting?" pursued Mrs. Graham. "Men of forty don't like women of thirty. They like girls of eighteen, which is a shame, and then they have babies as fast as can be, and they are grey-headed when their sons grow up, and these laugh at them as if they were in their dotage; and when they die they leave a young widow and a year-old baby behind them."

"Aunt, you make me feel quite low-spirited. A little more cream to cheer me up. That last baby is cruel, auntie. I did not think you could be so hard-hearted, auntie. Poor little innocent in its frilled cap!"

"Don't be foolish, Ned. Take an old woman's advice; get a nice girl, and marry her. She will be pleasant to look at, she will give you society, children, a comfortable home."

"And an unlimited number of cups of tea! My dear aunt, no woman is generous enough to do that. The dear creatures all grudge us the sugar."

"There it is," said Mrs. Graham, shaking her head at him. "You are already getting a cynical old bachelor. Now, if you had married Lily Scot," she pursued, looking at the fire, "it would be different with you, Ned.

"Yes, aunt, it would," he answered, looking at her attentively.

"I daresay that since that time you have never seen such a nice girl as she was?"

"Well, I don't think I have, aunt. Miss Scot was a charming girl; and then, oh! rare and inestimable blessing, she knew nothing of music! You rail at me for a bachelor. I de-

clare to you the music of young ladies has often scared me away from the shores of matrimony."

"Ned," said Mrs. Graham, looking him full in the face, "why should you not marry Lily Scot?"

Mr. Graham neither moved nor started at this point-blank proposal. His hand, which was raising the cup to his lips, neither put it up more hastily, nor laid it down with displeasure and impatience, but gravity settled on his whole aspect, as a cloud may darken a Summer sky.

"Aunt, this is all over, and has been over for years," said he, slowly.

"Why so? You are not poor now, and Lily is as pretty, and as nice, too, as ever."

"And what has become of Mr. William Lennard?" asked Mr. Graham, drily.

"Oh! Ned, don't you know? The poor boy was lost with the *Swallow* a year ago."

There was a pause, during which neither spoke.

"Ned," resumed Mrs. Graham, "I think you were all wrong about that lad. Mrs. Petherick made a world of mischief with all her talk; and

if Lily Scot was engaged to him, why, it was Mrs. Petherick's doing. As to Lily herself, I tell you she is as dear a girl as ever, and I could not see her again without thinking of you."

"Is Miss Scot in England?" asked Mr. Graham, in a tone of polite indifference, which ought to have chilled his aunt's zeal; but she only answered, more warmly,

"Of course she is, the dear girl, with her mother. Jane is gone to live with her aunt in Torquay, and Louisa has remained in Saint Aubin as a governess, and I don't think that Mrs. Scot means to remain in England," said Mrs. Graham, in the eagerness of her zeal.

Mr. Graham was silent. His aunt's face fell.

"I am sorry," she said. "I thought—I hoped you cared for her still. I don't mean as you did formerly, but enough to begin over again."

She looked at him with her simple earnestness, and leaning back in his chair, he looked at her, smiling at her quaint phraseology.

"Dear old auntie," he thought, "she never was in love, save with her poor, her vagrants,

her stray cats and dogs, that is plain. How she talks of beginning over again! As if one ever did!"

"And so you will not," said Mrs. Graham, and her face fell. "Well, Ned, do you think it likely that you will ever meet again with such a girl as Lily—so pretty, so sensible, so amiable. Do you expect it?"

"No, aunt," he candidly answered; "I should be a fool if I did. Miss Scot is by a good deal the prettiest and most amiable girl I have met in my time. *Ma che volete*," he added, relapsing as he did sometimes into his mother's language, "there came a jar between us, it lasted a moment only, but it broke the spell which time and separation had weakened, and I, for one, don't care to begin again."

"The more's the pity," said Mrs. Graham, rather sadly; "I should have liked you to have a nice wife, and my dear Lily a good husband."

"Let us hope both your wishes will be fulfilled, aunt," he answered, smiling; "and what about Saint Aubin—how is the old place getting on?"

"Lily does not say much. Mr. Lennard is ailing and very wicked. And what do you think? Mr. Cowper, you know, has set up as

an architect; he is not doing very well, I believe."

"Monsieur Duhamel's shoes, I suppose," said Edward Graham, drily.

"Mrs. Petherick and Captain Jekyll have had a terrible quarrel about nothing, as usual, and some people are dead and some new people have come, and Mr. Lennard, I forgot that, Mr. Lennard is more bitter than ever about our having helped Lily Bertram to escape."

"Poor little Lily! you have never seen her since?"

"No, never. She is so far away. I got a letter from her the other day—a nice letter. Shall I show it to you?"

Mrs. Graham half rose.

"No, auntie, thank you," said he, checking her, "for now that I have drunk all your tea, I must bid you good night."

"Lily and her mother are coming to take tea with me next week," said Mrs. Graham, unwilling to lose this last chance. But Mr. Graham only smiled again, bade her a good night, and so left her.

The night was a fine one. Mr. Graham walked home. He had a house in Pimlico now,

and might have kept his carriage, if he liked. So at least said the world, which always knows so well what we can or cannot do with our money. But the truth was that, though Mr. Graham could have afforded his horse and brougham, like another man, the expense might have entailed many things which he did not care to face, and being a man of a prudent turn, he had resolved to wait till he married (for to marry he intended), before he indulged in this almost necessary luxury. In two or three years he hoped to be able to have both wife and carriage, and in the meanwhile he was well content to wait. So he now walked home, as we said, but with him, for the first time for many, many months, walked the memory of that past which his aunt had called up. It was not love, for love is no Phœnix to rise from its ashes, but even the ghost of love is strong, and, spirit-like, is not laid easily to rest. Edward Graham could not help going back to that first dream of his youth; he was not an old man, but he had outlived the feelings which had made Lily Scot dear to him. He felt that he could not, even if he wished it, like her again for that which had made him like her years ago.

By the change in himself he guessed what the change in her must be. Miss Scot was now twenty-five; she had had trials and disappointments, and, for all he knew, deep sorrows. Had she grieved for that rough boy who had been lost at sea? Had she mourned in secret over his ocean grave, and borne outwardly the same serene aspect which he remembered so well, which had enchanted him at first, but which, to the seeming of his mature years, was too like the gentle beauty of a moonlight night to charm him now. Who could tell?—she never would. Never would her husband know her real feelings on that score. She would be gentle, affectionate, and fond, but what William Lennard or another man had been to her, she would keep within her own heart as a portion of the past with which he need have no concern.

Such meditations did not seem very favourable to Mrs Graham's wishes; and yet they had stirred to their very depths those sluggish waters of indifference beneath which the image of Lily Scot had slept for years. She now rose before him, on the darkness of the night, in her graceful beauty, young, fair, sweet, and gentle,

not, perhaps, all that she was, but at least all that she had seemed to be in his eyes. And, after all, with what sins could he reproach her? What had she done that her shrine should be desecrated? Must we always revile the worship from which we turn? Can we not keep some tender reverence for the past which we abjure? And so, little by little, something of that secret revolt with which he had received his aunt's suggestions melted away out of Edward Graham's heart. He was not in the least inclined "to begin again," but the protest with which he had heard Mrs. Graham seemed to grow more feeble as he remembered the past.

And when he reached his pleasant house in Pimlico—when he entered that large, handsomely-furnished room, so unlike Mrs. Rawlings's dingy parlour—when he went up to the ebony bookcase, and took down De Renneville, it was not chance that led his hand. The name and memory of Lily Scot had brought in their train recollections, of which he wished to test the correctness by referring to the volume which had played so great a part in his life. But chance it was, that Nemesis which seems to mock the present with the past, that made a

card fall out of the book on the floor at his feet. He picked it up, and saw before him that little image of Lily Scot which his aunt had left behind her on the night when De Renneville had first become his. The photograph had not remained there all that time. It had long been kept amongst Edward Graham's choicest treasures, then gently and respectfully placed within the pages of the fated book as a sad and tender memorial of a happy yet sorrowful past; then, inevitable destiny, it had been forgotten in the great busy tide of life, and now it fell out on the Turkey carpet at his feet, a reproach, and, maybe, a sign!

"After all, why not?" thought Mr. Graham, looking at the sweet face almost as kindly as he had looked at it five years before. "It will not be love—that first love which, if it be not a dream, passes like one—but it will do nearly as well, as the world goes. After all, I know ten times more of her than of another girl. I risk little or nothing with Lily Scot, and with a stranger what do I not venture! Surely, surely marriage is the most awful leap in the dark man or woman ever took. Is it not a rare privilege, then, when we can pledge our-

selves to beings whom we know, whose virtues and whose weaknesses are not hidden from us behind that impenetrable veil, which is deeper and darker than that of the Egyptian goddess herself?"

He looked about him. The room, as we have said, was a handsome one. It had a few fine bronzes and some choice paintings. Italian landscapes, wild Scotch mountains, fair Irish lakes, brought their southern light and radiance, their savage grandeur, and their wonderful beauty to this London home. A cheerful fire burned on the hearth, whether he were absent or at home; a lamp shed its clear light on a table laden with pamphlets, newspapers, and books, to welcome the master of the house. His easy chair was even waiting to give him rest, and yet there was a void in this abode of comfort and ease—something was wanting in this room so pleasant to the eye.

"After all, why not?" thought he, as he put away the photograph, and laid it once more in De Renneville's book. "It will not pledge either of us to anything." And on the impulse of the moment, he wrote off to Mrs. Graham:

"DEAR AUNTIE,

"I will look in upon you any evening that you will please to appoint. A whole evening is rarely mine, as you know. If I should fail, you will think that the way, not the will, was wanting.

"Yours affectionately,

"EDWARD GRAHAM."

"I am so glad," Mrs. Graham said aloud, on receiving this intimation that her nephew had changed his mind. "I shall ask Lily Scot and her mother at once. But perhaps—perhaps I shall say nothing about his coming, so that if he should not be able to come," prudently thought Mrs. Graham, "there will be no harm done."

CHAPTER IV.

"MRS. FAY!—surely I know the name of Mrs. Fay!" thought Edward Graham, the next morning, as he opened one after the other the heap of letters on his breakfast-table, and lingered over one—a little perfumed scrawl, written in a delicate, though erratic hand. "Saint Olave's Abbey—that, too, I know, or ought to know." Then all at once the past came back, and was once more living before him. Mrs. Fay was that wealthy friend of his aunt's to whose patronage the good lady had so often and so vainly recommended him; and Saint Olave's Abbey was one of the fine old mediæval relics which he had visited in the days of his obscure and ambitious youth. "So Mrs. Fay wants me now," thought he, smiling —"she wants me to come and look at her old

tumble-down thing of an abbey, and intimates that I am to have *carte blanche.* Kind Mrs. Fay! It is the rule of this world—because I no longer want you, you want me."

He leaned his elbow on the table, and dreamily went back the tide of years. Once more, with the light heart of youth, he leaped down from the third-class carriage which had taken him to Saint Olave's—it is only an hour's distance from London by rail—and walked through the green and peaceful country. How sweet feels this Summer air, when you leave the hot town!—and what a land of rich harvests and plenteous stores is this! Woods shelter it everywhere from cold bleak winds; and surely storms must rarely visit this favoured region, though here and there on a rise of ground you get a distant glimpse of a low blue line of sea. A fine avenue of trees leads to the abbey, and Mr. Graham smiles as he sees his past self standing at the gate-keeper's lodge, hearing that burly potentate's verdict, "Oh! yes, you may go and look at the place, but we don't allow no visitors to visit the abbey. Madam Fay is away, and whether or no we never let anyone see the abbey, sir."

The man's tone, though not unkind, was arrogant enough, but Edward Graham had to submit. He had not then the "Open Sesame" which now would make every door of that closed dwelling fly open at his command. He went and looked at the abbey, then walked round it till he came to a ruined chapel overlooking a quiet little lake. A tall cedar-tree grew nigh, and flung the shadow of its spreading boughs over the tranquil waters. He could not resist the temptation of sketching it—he had the drawing in his portfolio still—the ivy-grown ruin, the broad tree, the shining sheet of water over all, the warm glow of a Summer sun—how well he remembered them, spite the years that had gone by. Then with a wistful look at the forbidden abbey he had turned away, walked back along the avenue, through the pleasant country to the station, and entered the heat and din of mighty London once more.

"I have a mind to go and look at the old place," now thought Mr. Graham. "Let me see, I have no appointment, no pressing engagement for this afternoon. I shall just run down, and be back to-morrow in time to meet Mr. Jervas."

So said, so done. The day's engagements were crowded into the morning, and by four in the afternoon Mr. Graham had reached Saint Olave's.

Mrs. Fay is the owner of the old abbey. Everyone knows, or ought to know, Mrs. Fay. A diplomatist might envy her successes in life. In her youth she persuaded the world that she was a beauty; in middle age she convinced it that she was a wit; and now that she is getting old, she has coaxed it into the belief that she is prodigiously wealthy. There was a time when men raved about her, when great painters gave loveliness to her slight features and colourless face, and when engravers vied in reproducing the image of the beautiful Laura Fay.

"Yes, my dear, I was a beauty once," she says, with a sigh, "but I went off very early. It was well for me that I was more than a beauty," adds Mrs. Fay, with that calm assertion of her own *esprit* which has helped to establish her reputation for brilliancy in conversation and quickness of repartee. After the same fashion has Mrs. Fay impressed society with a conviction that she has a large income, of which she only spends a limited portion. "I am the

stingiest creature alive," says Mrs. Fay; "when I have a whim, I must gratify it, of course, but otherwise I stint so that I am ashamed of myself, and I don't know why I do it. I have neither kith nor kin, I hate charities, and I am the last person in the world to leave legacies to my friends, so why should I save?" And as Mrs. Fay is really rich—as she is most lavish when she does spend, and as she can also be stingy to meanness, society takes her at her word, endows her with a fabulous rent-roll, and makes much of the little old fairy. "Yes, my dear, they call me Fairy," Mrs. Fay says, with a shrewd nod, "and I do not care." This is not quite true. Mrs. Fay likes the name, for it implies power, which Mrs. Fay has always been very fond of. Besides, everyone knows that fairies are beautiful, clever, and rich, and is not, or has not, Mrs. Fay been all this? Her wit, indeed, has, like her beauty, gone rather early, but who will miss it while the golden wand remains in her hand?

"The old fellow is there still," thought Mr. Graham, as the fly which had brought him from the station drove past the gatekeeper's lodge; "but times are altered with us both;

the years that have given him a gouty foot have helped me to climb up a few rungs of the social ladder. But what can tempt Mrs. Fay to lay a profane finger on this noble old place?"

He had reached the end of the avenue, alighted from the fly, and dismissed it. The abbey lay before him in a pleasant sunlit hollow. It was a fine old building, calm and grey in its decay, with waving woods and low wide plains around it. The garden in front was bright with flowers and gaily attired ladies, for it so happened that on this day Mrs. Fay was giving a *fête champêtre* to four hundred and fifty people. She was walking between a bishop and a peer of the realm, when her keen eye detected Mr. Graham at a distance. At once she guessed who he was, and coolly leaving her illustrious guests to keep each other company—for insolence was one of the secrets of her power over society—she walked off to greet the new-comer.

"Mr. Graham, I am sure," said she, looking up at him. Mrs. Fay was a very little old lady, and however lovely she might have been in youth, she now had a sharp nose and a peaked-

up chin, which was always raised inquiringly. "So kind of you to have come! Pray don't mind all these foolish people, but look at the abbey as long as you please. A dear old thing, is it not? And oh! Mr. Graham, *when* will you begin? I am the most impatient creature breathing, you must know."

She spoke with an almost girlish ardour, which was not the affectation of youthfulness, but the inevitable result of a light and frivolous mind. Mr. Graham looked at the little figure so fashionably attired, at the little plump gloved hands clasped in entreaty, and he contemptuously wondered at this foolish old age.

"Don't say that you cannot begin at once," almost screamed Mrs. Fay, "or I shall be so horridly cross. And now do tell me which side the wing is to be at, for of course you know it is a wing like Mr. Blake's that I want."

Mr. Graham looked at the abbey as it shone in the mellow sunlight of afternoon, then at the little thin pale face and bright eyes turned up to him, and he searched in vain for traces of the beauty that had once been so famous.

"She never was handsome," was his pitiless verdict, "never, never."

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"Well," said Mrs. Fay, losing patience, "which is it to be, a right wing or a left?"

"Both, or neither," was his laconic reply.

Mrs. Fay looked enchanted.

"Two wings," she cried, clapping her hands in an ecstasy. "Of course that is the very thing. I wonder Mr. Blake had only one. And when am I to get these wings, Mr. Graham?"

If the wings had been meant for Mrs. Fay's shoulders, she could not have shown more impatience to possess them. But Mr. Graham, who was a leisurely man, declined to pledge himself on such short notice.

"But I can't wait!" cried Mrs. Fay, puckering up her face into fretful wrinkles. "I am not used to it. I am a little spoiled thing, Mr. Graham, and I have to go back to those tiresome people. Now I shall settle it all so nicely. You will end the week with me, and we shall talk it all over by ourselves."

Nothing could be more coaxingly imperious than Mrs. Fay, as she spoke thus.

"I mnst be in London to-morrow," said Mr. Graham, smiling, "and——"

"To-morrow?" interrupted Mrs. Fay, stop-

ping her ears. "A day! No, no, not one day —three, four, five days at the very least! I know hundreds of people, and they will drop in and interfere. One day would never do *me*. And now that is settled, I must go back to my bishop. Will you come? Ah! no, you don't want a bishop, you want to look at the abbey. Just so! Please to ask for anything you may require. My people expect you, and will attend to all your wishes. *Au revoir,* Mr. Graham."

She waved her little hand and tripped away, light-footed as at fifteen.

"And so Mrs. Fay thinks I am going to spend a week at Saint Olave's," thought Mr. Graham, too much amused at her presumption to be angry with her. "A week! Not for more money than you would care to spend, Mrs. Fay. You might have had me cheap enough a few years ago, but you did not want me when I was cheap, and now that I am expensive I no longer want you. I suppose the chapel is not gone. This is the way to it, I remember."

Leaving the garden to his left, he walked round the abbey, and soon found the ruin. Nothing seemed changed since he had sat down to draw it, on yonder brown old rock, with its

cap of velvet green. The little Gothic building, the old tree, the clear water he gazed on seemed unaltered.

"A little less stone and more ivy for the ruin," he thought, "and for me by way of ivy, I suppose, a dozen years more or so, that is all."

As he came to this philosophic conclusion, a group of ladies, at the head of whom walked little Mrs. Fay, broke on his meditations. With a quick step the mistress of the house preceded her visitors, and uplifting her little pale face and sharp chin, she said to Mr. Graham, with that scant courtesy which was one of her attributes, and, indeed, with something of imperiousness,

"Mr. Graham, I beg you will remember that you are pledged to me. Miss Cowper's college is a myth. Besides, there is no believing a word she says."

"Miss Cowper!" repeated Mr. Graham, with a sudden remembrance of the past.

"Yes, yes, Miss Cowper, my neighbour. I was telling Mr. Graham about the college," she added, raising her voice, and turning back to the group of ladies who now stood close by.

"He is the very man for you, dear," she continued, with that abominable deceitfulness which is the attribute of your true woman of the world.

Edward Graham could not help looking hard at the lady thus addressed. She certainly was not the Miss Cowper whom he remembered, for she was not merely tall and thin, but she was scarcely thirty years of age. Moreover, she was dressed in the richest of rich silks, and wore a black velvet cuirass, which gave her a rather masculine aspect, and accorded with the deep voice in which she now addressed him.

"I have heard of you, Mr. Graham," she said, with a good deal of patronage, "and I have no doubt that, as Mrs. Fay says, you are the man for the college. The regeneration woman's college. You have heard of it, of course."

"Of course he has," said the audacious Mrs. Fay; "who has not? This way, my dear creature."

She was tripping on, but the lady in the black cuirass kept her ground.

"I shall be glad to hold some converse with you on that topic," she continued, addressing

Mr. Graham with measured solemnity, "I live close by—at Cowper's Hill."

She would have said more, but Mrs. Fay uttered a piercing scream. She had seen a frog; she was sure she had, and frogs were her horror.

"Frogs are perfectly harmless," composedly remarked the lady in the black cuirass, whose mention of Cowper's Hill had rather startled Edward Graham. Was the Miss Cowper whom he had known dead and gone, and had this other Miss Cowper, so different from her, taken her place and inheritance? But Mrs. Fay's frog gave him no time to seek for further explanation. All the ladies had to gather round Mrs. Fay, and whether because she was really frightened, or because she did not want the regeneration woman's college to occupy Mr. Graham's mind to the detriment of her two wings, she certainly succeeded in depriving him of the opportunity of saying another word to the lady in the black cuirass.

He was not more fortunate with Mrs. Fay herself when they met at dinner. They were alone; for as Mrs. Fay candidly confessed, "I told a dreadful fib, Mr. Graham—said I had such

a headache, and so four or five people, who would have stayed if I had asked them, took themselves off. A great comfort!"

Mr. Graham smiled.

"I suppose that Miss Cowper," he began, but Mrs. Fay at once stopped her ears with her little white fingers.

"Not a word about that lady, if we are to be friends," she said, a little imperiously; then with a pretty, coaxing look, "you could not see about my wings next Monday? No. Well, then, promise now, do"—in her most persuasive accents—"that you will not let anything else interfere with my wings. You will not begin anything else first, will you, Mr. Graham?"

Mr. Graham smiled and looked amused, but he would not promise. Moreover, he was going back to town to-morrow."

"But you cannot leave me in the lurch," pleaded Mrs. Fay. "I am sure I have known some one of your name for whom I had a particular regard, only I can't remember who it is," she candidly added.

"Perhaps my aunt, Mrs. Graham, he suggested.

"Is it possible!" cried Mrs. Fay, clasping her

hands in amazement, "are you really Mrs. Graham's nephew? And how is she—the dear, dear creature, and her niece, that Miss Graham whom she was so fond of—your sister, I suppose; how is *she?*"

And Mrs. Fay looked at Mr. Graham with the deepest interest.

"I have no sister, and my aunt has no niece called Miss Graham," he answered, a little drily.

"Ah! then it was her nephew that she was so fond of," said Mrs. Fay, no whit disconcerted, "and you are that nephew, of course. How delightful! Only what a terrible pity I did not know long ago that you were an architect."

Mr. Graham, remembering how his aunt's recommendation had fared formerly, could not help smiling.

"But how naughty of you," said Mrs. Fay, plaintively, "not to have told me at once that you were the nephew of my dear, dear old friend Mrs. Graham."

"How many years is it since you saw my aunt, Mrs. Fay?"

"Ah! so many," answered Mrs. Fay in a melancholy tone, "ever so many years; dear

Mrs. Graham, how I have missed her!" and her eyes twinkled as she looked at Mr. Graham. "I suppose she is quite old now," she added; "dear old soul! I shall be so glad to see her again. I am *so* fond of old people," said Mrs. Fay, quite warmly.

Mrs. Fay was certainly a very entertaining person. Her audacity amused Mr. Graham extremely. He would not give her the pledge she again wanted to exact, for she was a very obstinate lady, but he drew a rough sketch of the two wings to please this impatient creature. Mrs. Fay was delighted, and when Mr. Graham hinted that he could not as yet give her any idea of what the expense would be—

"Oh, never mind about *that*," said she, with an airy contempt of money. "I am so rich that I do not know what to do with it all. Good night, Mr. Graham. These people have worn me out. Sit up and enjoy yourself as long as you like, and when you dream, please let it be about my wings."

"Does she mean it all, I wonder?" thought Mr. Graham, looking after her little figure and long trailing skirt. "Is she so wealthy and so lavish as she says? She has a keen eye, and I

shall be much surprised if Mrs. Fay cannot drive a hard bargain."

And Mr. Graham went up to his room, consulted the time-tables, and thought that instead of leaving by the two o'clock train, as he had intended, he might as well go by that other train, which left the nearest station at nine minutes past nine the next morning. He did not care about Mrs. Fay—he did not even care about adding a pair of wings to the old abbey; he had seen it again; he had had half a day's fresh air, and he wanted to be back to his work.

CHAPTER V.

MRS. FAY was not an early riser, but she got up the next morning an hour before her usual time.

"I want to see about my wings, Hammond," she gaily said to her maid. "And I declare the dear man is already staring up at the front of the house, taking notes, of course. Do give me my dressing-gown—a wrapper—anything will do. I must go and see what the man is about."

"Won't you let me do up your hair, ma'am?" asked Hammond, remonstratively.

"Oh, he is only an architect," answered Mrs. Fay, skipping downstairs.

But, though being only an architect, Edward Graham was not worth having one's hair done up for him, he was still of sufficient importance to be coaxed and wheedled, so far as Mrs. Fay's powers in that line extended.

"How good of you to be already seeing about it!" said the aged syren, as she sidled up to him, with her most amiable smile. "You know that time presses with me, don't you, and that, if others can wait, I, alas! cannot? I am sure you will not let anything else interfere now, will you? Can't I peep?" standing up on tip-toe to look at the note-book in his hand. "What! only ciphers! Oh, you dreadful Mr. Graham! don't you know that I am the most impatient creature breathing? Now, I am sure you will be indulgent to my little foibles, will you not? —and you will go to the library, and do me such a nice drawing this morning. I know you will!"

If the eyes which looked up at him so pleadingly had only been twenty-five years younger —if the disordered locks with which the morning breeze played had only been (as they once were) fair and shining—Mr. Graham could scarce have resisted such pressing entreaties. He uttered, indeed, no denial—nay, he actually condescended to yield so far to Mrs. Fay's request as to go to the library. Oh, how willingly would she have locked him up there! But, instead of sitting down and executing at

once the nice drawing the impatient lady wanted, the faithless man, as soon as her back was turned, walked out into the garden, crossed the grounds, and, only stopping to ask the porter at the lodge the right way, soon vanished down the shady path which led to Cowper's Hill. And let it not be supposed that Mr. Graham was going there unasked. Early that very morning he had received from Miss Cowper a pressing request to call upon her, and give her an opportunity of explaining her views on the woman's regeneration college. The wish of knowing how this Miss Cowper in the black cuirass could be mistress of Cowper's Hill, and in what relation she stood to the other Miss Cowper in black serge, who wanted to build almshouses, induced Mr. Graham to comply almost immediately with the lady's request.

Mrs. Fay and her rival were next door neighbours—the grounds of the one almost touched the flower-garden of the other, for Cowper's Hill was no more than an old brick house on a green lawn, with a background of tall trees. A servant in a plain livery showed Mr. Graham into a low dark sitting-room on the ground floor, took his card, and left him.

The young man remained alone so long that he thought he must surely have been forgotten. The house was very silent. He sat on a low ottoman. Through a window next him he looked on the sunlit lawn across which he had come; through the other on the opposite side of the room he saw the forest gloom of the fine old trees which sheltered the house from the northern winds. How cool and dark they looked, though only clothed as yet in the tender green of Spring. What a fresh and dewy chillness was that which lingered beneath their spreading boughs. How birds could build their nests there generation after generation, and sing love idylls Spring after Spring, whilst centuries glided by like years over the green heads of those stately beeches. Edward Graham loved fine trees. He loved them all the more that nothing he did or could do was like to them. He loved them in the depth of Winter, when their boughs were laden with snow, or hung with icicles, and the stillness of death filled their deserted chambers; in the Summer time, when they were as green palaces, wherein many guests could dwell; birds and insects who lived there in happy liberty; airy palaces,

whose foundations the storm had never shaken, yet through whose leafy halls and galleries the breeze could freely play.

"We have outlived the Dryads of my heathen forefathers," thought Edward Graham, looking at the foremost and finest of the group of trees which had wakened those thoughts within him; "and yet was it so strange in them to create a link and find an analogy between a fair goddess and so noble and beautiful a thing as that tree yonder. Has it not the perennial freshness of ever renewed youth, and is not its long life akin to immortality?"

He had no time to pursue those speculations —a door behind him opened, and he turned round, as a lady, young, beautiful, and richly dressed, entered the room. He rose, she stood for a moment by the door which she had just closed, and in that moment Edward Graham thought, "This is the loveliest creature I have ever seen, and yet I have seen her before." Yes, surely he had seen those rich brown tresses, with the little scarlet bow pinned amongst them, that snowy brow, those deep brown eyes, and that face of dazzling bloom, which concealed every imperfection of feature. He had seen

them, but without the breath of life, without the kind, though modest look, the soft shy smile that now greeted him.

"You have forgotten me, Mr. Graham," said the beautiful girl—"I am Lily—Lily Bertram," she added, reddening beneath his steady gaze.

"I beg your pardon," said he, reddening too, "I knew you at once—not as yourself, but as the portrait of—of—" he hesitated.

"My great-grandmother," said Lily. "Yes, I suppose there is a likeness. Miss Cowper will be down very soon, Mr. Graham, and she hopes you will be so kind as to wait a few minutes longer."

Her manner was gentle, but very composed. Her voice was sweet, clear, and refined—there was no awkward shyness about Miss Bertram, yet nothing could be more unlike the Lily whom Mr. Graham remembered than the lovely girl before him. She was scarcely above the middle height, and though her figure had still the slenderness of youth, it had also the grace and dignity of early womanhood. Was this charming creature the raw, slipshod girl whom Mr. Graham had known?

Involuntarily he glanced down at her feet; only one peeped out from the edge of her silk dress—a little foot, daintily shod in a high-heeled and buckled shoe. Even the pretty little brown hands of Lily Bertram were altered. They were now lily white, and sparkled with rings, and Mr. Graham caught the glitter of a narrow gold bracelet on her fair arm, and of a little gold chain and enamelled locket around her soft white neck. The years that had passed over Lily's brown head had worked a change as mighty as ever was wrought by the stroke of an enchanter's wand. And surely time is the greatest enchanter this life of ours can know; for whilst Miss Bertram, wondering at his silence, inquired after his aunt's health, and endeavoured to open a conversation, Edward Graham, looking at her with ravished eyes, said to himself, with sudden and passionate regret—"Oh! fool, fool, I might have married her! This peerless creature, beautiful as a goddess, and in whose lovely face goodness and sweetness alike are written—she might have been mine!" He was entranced, and though he made more than one attempt to rouse himself to answer Miss Bertram—nay, to

enter into some sort of sensible discourse with her—the violence and the suddenness of his feelings conquered the effort of his will.

Who can account for that wonderful mystery, love at first sight? It seems too strange to be true, and it is a reality which can be blissful or tragic—which can gladden or destroy even more than two human lives. How does a man know that a woman whose voice he has scarcely heard, is, and must ever be, the sovereign queen of his heart? He may be deceived. That queen's rule may be as brief as it was sudden, but whilst it lasts it is supreme. She is queen absolute indeed, and need fear no rival in the present or the past.

If Miss Bertram secretly wondered at Mr. Graham's strange, disturbed looks and manner, she gave no sign of having read their meaning. Her own bearing remained very calm, and with self-possession, though not more than became her years, she still spoke of his aunt to Miss Cowper's visitor.

"I have not seen her once since she brought me over from Dieppe," said Miss Bertram, with a wistful smile, which suddenly brought back to Edward Graham that little Lily in the cloak

and hood who had looked in at him through the parlour window of the "Trois Couronnes," and who had walked into the room with her bundle in her hand. "I have been educated in a convent in Somersetshire, and now I am to go back to Saint Aubin as soon as I am of age. Miss Cowper has been very good to me," added Miss Bertram, in a low voice.

"But surely it was not Miss Cowper whom I saw yesterday?" said Mr. Graham.

"Oh, no," and here a merry smile broke over Miss Bertram's face, and filled it with sunshine —"that was her friend, Miss Mortlock. This is Miss Cowper," she added, as the door opened, and a lady walked in.

Mr. Graham knew her at once, and yet Miss Cowper was very different from what she had been. She was older, of course, and she was stouter too; but the alteration in her toilette was still greater than that in her appearance. Miss Cowper had discarded black serge and the mediæval costume for moire and velvet, and jewelry and laces, and it soon appeared that the change in Miss Cowper's ideas was more radical than even that in her attire.

"I am happy to see you, Mr. Graham," said

the lady, sitting down with a great rustling of silk, and scarcely glancing at her visitor—"quite glad to renew our acquaintance. Thanks for coming so promptly. I want to explain some of my views to you. Cowper's Hill is a small place, but there is a great deal of land attached to it. I wish to build a college, as my friend Miss Mortlock has told you. I intend regenerating woman," continued Miss Cowper, with the cool modesty of most regenerators. "Woman is very low—indeed, her position is vile; but I am in earnest, Mr. Graham, and I mean to raise her."

Alas! for the Miss Cowper in black serge, all whose proclivities were for the Middle Ages and Sisters of Mercy! She was gone, and nothing of her remained but the words "earnest" and "vile," which answered as well for the regeneration of woman by a college as for her relief by the building of almshouses. Whilst she spoke, Edward Graham compared the present with the past, and he also looked at Miss Bertram. She sat leaning back in her chair, looking at the rings on her fingers, as her hands lay idly folded on her lap. Her downcast eyes told him nothing, but he thought he read

a sad seriousness in her face, and gazing at it, he became so absent that Miss Cowper, who had gone on discoursing, stopped short, and said, rather sharply—

"I fear you are not attending to me, Mr. Graham."

In a moment the young man was turned back into the matter-of-fact (earnest, Miss Cowper would have said) architect. What would Mrs. Fay's feelings have been, if she could have heard the faithless man, as he threw himself heart and soul into Miss Cowper's college? What would she have thought if, when Miss Mortlock came in armed cap-a-pie, even at that early hour, as Edward Graham thought, when he saw that she had already donned the black cuirass, the three began to speak of halls and lecture-rooms with the gusto of so many professors. Miss Mortlock indeed took the lead, and dictated, not merely to Miss Cowper, but to Mr. Graham himself; and he, base man, quickly perceiving that Miss Mortlock was the ruling power of the house where the lovely Miss Bertram dwelt, adhered to all her views with the degrading subserviency of his complaint.

"Of course, of course," he hastened to say, in

answer to some preposterous assertion of Miss Mortlock's. "The building must be Elizabethan, as you so justly remark."

"Gothic would never do," remarked Miss Mortlock, looking severely at Miss Cowper.

"Gothic is the type of intellectual and moral darkness," complacently said Miss Cowper, gazing straight before her. Her look met that of Mr. Graham, but without the slightest recognition of that past in which Gothic had been a very different type indeed.

"My dear Miss Cowper," reproachfully exclaimed Miss Mortlock, "how can you! Moral darkness! Do not you know that we have been in moral darkness all along?"

"I thought——" began Miss Cowper.

"No such a thing," interrupted Miss Mortlock, with the greatest decision. "The new moral law, as my brother, Professor Mortlock, has so often explained to you, is essentially a modern and recent discovery. A new light."

"Just like gas," remarked Miss Cowper, with great originality.

"Much more recent than gas," said Miss Mortlock, severely. "Indeed, when the college is built, which I trust will be soon, my brother the

Professor intends having the exact date of the discovery of the new moral law inscribed on a marble tablet of the great hall."

She spoke as if the college were the Professor's property, and Miss Cowper, once so jealous of her independence and her money, uttered no protest. Mr. Graham, rather surprised at the turn the conversation was taking, looked for Lily Bertram, and found that she had left the room. In a moment the spell which had made him forget time vanished, and with a hasty excuse, and a most willing promise to call again, he left the two ladies.

As he went down the steps of the *perron*, which led from the house to the lawn, he saw Miss Bertram walking along the path before him. He quickened his pace, and was soon by her side. She turned round on hearing his step, and seemed surprised to see him.

"Have you so soon settled all about the college?" she asked, with a smile.

"By no means," he quickly answered. "It will take many conversations to settle so weighty a matter."

"I suppose so," she said, absently.

They were walking along the path. How

cruelly short seemed the space that divided them from the gate. From the first moment he had known what ailed him, what he had lost in the past, what he might win in the future, and with the secret fear of strong desire, he now let every impulse of his heart centre on marriage as the only certainty. He had thought of little else whilst he was talking with Miss Cowper and Miss Mortlock. He thought of nothing else now.

"If I do not throw the whole might and passion of my will in securing her," he said to his own heart, "some other and more fortunate man will assuredly step in and snatch away from me a prize so fair and so tempting. Who is that Professor Mortlock? Is he young or old, married or single?"

Whoever he might be, Edward Graham hated him, and also felt that he had no time to lose.

"This is no case for hesitation," he again said to himself; "I am in the prime of life. I have a good position, I earn a fair income; I can marry to-morrow, if I please." And he looked at her eagerly as they walked along the gravelled path to the old-fashioned gate, with

its two red brick pillars and their vases of flowers spreading bright blossoms in the morning sun. Oh! if he could only ask her that very moment and have that terrible, that awful suspense over, and hear that yea or nay which was to be his final sentence. But it might not be. She who walked by his side was guarded by a lion as powerful as he who trod of yore in Virgin Una's steps. That spell of deep reverence without which there is no true love, would keep him tongue-tied, not for that day only, but for many a day yet to come. He felt as if he would scarcely venture to touch the hem of her garment with a profane hand, how could he then imply by word or look that he felt for her the love which leads to marriage? She was to be wooed and won—ah! how slowly if he might judge from the maiden grace of her whole bearing.

"And so you are going to improve the abbey, Mr. Graham," resumed Lily, after a pause.

"Mrs. Fay wishes for two wings," he said, "and of course Mrs. Fay must be gratified."

"Ah!"

She did not suggest that the task would

keep him a long time at Saint Olave's, but he could not help giving her the information.

"I have to go back to town to-day," he remarked, "but I shall return to-morrow, of course."

He looked at her, but though she said courteously, "How glad Miss Cowper will be to have you in the neighbourhood," his heart fell as he heard her.

The words were so coldly spoken. Mr. Graham might come or go, what was it to Miss Bertram? Could it be Professor Mortlock! He turned sick at the thought; but no, it was not that. Only where was the free, outspoken little Lily of the days gone by? By what wonderful transformation had she become the silent and graceful lady through whose every look and motion breathed the modest dignity of a perfect woman? When he looked in her lovely face he lost all hope, and when they parted at the gate and she turned back to the house, he gazed after her graceful figure as she moved slowly through the sunshine, with a pang at his heart. "She did not loiter one second as she walked by me," he thought,

"and now that I can no longer enjoy the precious moments, she lingers at every step she takes."

CHAPTER VI.

THERE is no change so complete as that wrought by a sudden and passionate love. Even the death of the most beloved, though it may break our very heartstrings, can scarcely affect man or woman so deeply. Death makes us poorer than we were; it robs us of all human hope and all joy, but it leaves our own selves unchanged. Not so love. That alters the whole being. It raises us to sublime heights of ecstasy, throws over life hues fairer than those of the sun of a southern clime, and for a few days, at least, it turns mere mortals into gods and goddesses—strong, fair, and exultant.

That fever was now on Edward Graham, and he went back to Saint Olave's no more like the man he had left it two hours before than darkness is to light. How had he lived till then? Had that been life—that cold, dull, grey, and

joyless existence? All the fire and passion which he had inherited from his Italian mother, and which lay hidden under the reserve and pride of his birth and rearing, now broke out as the flames of a northern volcano may pierce their mantle of snow. Miss Bertram's lovely blooming face was with him all the way as he walked back to Saint Olave's through the shade and sunshine of a country lane. It was before him still as he entered the abbey and went up to his room. It looked in at him through the open window which framed a fair prospect of Spring verdure and blue sky; no enchantment in the fairy stories loved by his childhood had ever been more potent than this. And he was so thoroughly bewitched that his present condition seemed the only natural one. A white square letter lay on his table. He took it up; it came from his aunt. What could she be writing about? Mrs. Graham's brief note ran thus:

"My dear Boy,

"Lily Scot and her mother will take tea with me next Tuesday, so do try and come. Lily is sweeter than ever. Yours truly,

"Mary Graham."

With a smile of vague wonder, Mr. Graham asked himself what his aunt could mean. Lily Scot! Surely he had never loved her—never! —never! He had felt for her the preference of a young man for the first pretty girl whom he happens to meet, but love!—he almost laughed at the thought, whilst he dropped his aunt's note with a careless hand, that she or any one could call that lukewarm feeling love. Love! There was no love but one felt for one woman, and the feeling was as much above every feeling of the kind, as she was above everything that wore woman's aspect.

The loud peal of the luncheon-bell called back Edward Graham to earth and Mrs. Fay. With a beating heart he felt that he was now in Mrs. Fay's power. What if she should change her mind, give up the wings, let him go back to town, and send him a cheque, with a note of polite regret for his useless trouble. He sickened at the thought! Miss Cowper's college was a dream, and he could not remain at Saint Olave's if its mistress chose to banish him! To his great relief, however, he found Mrs. Fay very cross at his excursion to Cowper's Hill, with which she had in some mysterious manner

become acquainted, and all the more bent upon her wings, that she was well-nigh distracted with jealousy of her neighbours. Not giving him time to eat a mouthful, she attacked him with her usual impetuosity.

"Well, Mr. Graham," she said, "whilst I fancied you were drawing, you were gadding at Cowper's Hill. Don't tell me you were not," she added, raising her forefinger. "I am a fairy—people call me so, at least; and I am never mistaken. I know you were there. Too bad of Miss Bertram!"

"What had Miss Bertram to do with it?' slowly asked Edward Graham.

"She a beauty!" continued Mrs. Fay, irritably —"I deny it. She never was and never will be a beauty!"

It was impossible to hear such blasphemy without uttering a protest.

"Miss Bertram seems to me the loveliest young woman whom I have ever seen," said Edward Graham, coolly.

"Oh! if you call a good complexion loveliness," scornfully exclaimed Mrs. Fay, "she has plenty of it."

It was useless to argue, but oh! how his fancy

went back to the witching face of Lily Bertram! How he saw once more the brown and golden hair with the scarlet bow, the lovely eyes, the exquisite mouth and dimpled chin, which were all so charming. The beauty of perfect feature she might not have, but the beauty of colour, of life, and light, is beauty, too, and this she had in a rare degree; and surely it was no lover's delusion that made him read sweetness and goodness in her every look and motion!

"There never was anyone so sly as Miss Bertram," resumed Mrs. Fay—"she makes me bring you here, and then decoys you away—shameful!"

"I thought it was because you had seen the wing which Mr. Blake——"

"His wing!" scornfully interrupted Mrs. Fay—"as if I cared for the man or his wing! Why, I never saw it—I had not even heard about you," she added, with the cruel frankness of the rich and the strong; "until she put it into my head to enlarge the abbey, told me you were quite a great man, and all that, I find out now, to bring you here that you might see about Miss Mortlock's nonsense college. Don't

talk to me of the regeneration of women," continued the pitiless old lady—"they will always be flirts from the beginning to the end of the chapter; and Miss Bertram, for all she is so demure, is no better than the rest."

Mr. Graham was pouring himself out a glass of claret. As slowly and as steadily as the rich red wine rose in his glass did a glow from his throbbing heart rise to his pale olive face when Mrs. Fay spake thus. It was Miss Bertram, then—she who had seemed so distant and so cold—who had been the cause of his coming. He remembered how partial to him she had been as a girl, and an exquisite hope awoke within him. What though she was now as much above her past self as the sparkling diamond, fit for a sovereign king, is above the rude, though precious, stone which the miner finds in the darkness of the earth? What though he felt, in his inmost heart, that he was not worthy of her, his humility, though sincere, was not carried so far as to make him imagine that another man would be more deserving than himself? Another man! Never, if he had the power, should another man call his that Lily Bertram, whom he—oh, madness ever

to be regretted!—had rejected! "I might have had her!" Such was the burden of his thoughts all the time Mrs. Fay went on railing.

"I am very much obliged to Miss Bertram," he said at length; "but there are plenty of good architects in England. What could make her think of me?"

But it was plain, from Mrs. Fay's own answer, that Lily had not taken her into her confidence.

"Miss Bertram is like nobody else," she said, sharply; "she has made architecture her peculiar study, I suppose; for, though she is habitually silent, she becomes something of a bore when she gets on that topic. Somehow or other she wheedled me into it until I became as crazy as herself; but if I had known that you were going to take up Miss Mortlock's college, and put my wings by, I would have let the abbey remain as it is, I can tell you."

"So you can now," he answered, smiling.

"Now—when I have set my mind upon it? No, Mr. Graham. I must never be baulked, so you will have to cut Miss Mortlock, and devote yourself to me."

He was amused by her imperative tone, and

tried to pacify her by declaring that Miss Mortlock's—or, rather, Miss Cowper's—college was still so remote an event that she need have no fear for her wings. The ladies only wanted to expound their views to him. He did not add that, judging from the past, Miss Cowper's views were chiefly remote ones; but Mrs. Fay supplied the information.

"She is very slippery," said she; "mind that, Mr. Graham. She was all for almshouses once, and the Rev. Mr. Randon; and now she has dropped them both, become a rank infidel, and she is all for Professor Mortlock and a college. But she will build it in words—mind what I say, Mr. Graham—in words. Now, I am matter-of-fact, and you may rely upon *me*. But I am fickle," added Mrs. Fay. "I don't deny it, and you must make hay with me whilst the sun shines. I honestly advise you to have a contract, or that sort of thing, and tie me down whilst I am in the mood. Otherwise—*je pourrais vous planter là,* as our lively neighbours say."

"That would be a sad case indeed," answered Mr. Graham. "But then I should have Miss Mortlock to save me from despair. A very

superior person—Miss Mortlock," he perversely added.

"Superior!" almost screamed Mrs. Fay. "Why, she is the greatest donkey that ever lived, excepting her brother," kindly added Mrs. Fay.

Mr. Graham carelessly remarked that he did not remember the name of Professor Mortlock.

"Don't you?" said the old lady, with a shrill laugh. "Well, I am giving the set a dinner to-morrow, and you can see the creature, and hear him too."

"But I am going away to-day, Mrs. Fay," calmly said Mr. Graham.

It was a bold card, but he risked it, and the event proved that he had played well. Instead of taking him at his word, and letting him depart, Mrs. Fay went nearly crazy at the suggestion.

"Going away! You can't, Mr. Graham. I want you. I can't let you go."

"But I must, my dear madam. I have an appointment in town for four o'clock."

"Send a telegram."

Mr. Graham shook his head.

"I know that if you go you will not come back," she said, dolorously.

Mr. Graham looked mollified, and seemed to hesitate.

"Oh! do promise to come back, Mr. Graham, do promise."

And Mrs. Fay clasped her hands, and looked piteous. Mr. Graham still hesitated. She renewed her entreaties, and Mr. Graham yielded, and gave Mrs. Fay his word that he would return the following day. But it is hard to deceive a woman. Something Mrs. Fay must have seen, for, giving her guest a very sharp look, she added, abruptly,

"The Professor is Miss Bertram's property, you know."

The blow fell as she had meant it to fall—heavily. Mr. Graham was stunned for a moment. There was a pause, during which Mrs. Fay watched him; then he said, calmly,

"Ah! I suppose they are engaged?"

"I should not wonder if they were," said Mrs. Fay, still looking hard at him.

But though that look enlightened him, though he was almost sure that Mrs. Fay only spoke so to torment him, Mr. Graham none the less felt a miserable man at the thought of Professor Mortlock. Nevertheless he rallied enough to say,

"I suppose the Professor is a young man?"

"About your own age," replied Mrs. Fay; "and very handsome," she pitilessly added.

Mr. Graham looked straight before him, whilst a sickening fear crept round his heart, and chilled the blood in his veins. Was it possible that this, the great, the first real love of his life, must perish in its very birth? He longed and he dreaded to see Miss Bertram and that hateful Professor together. Should he keep his promise to Mrs. Fay, or break it? Not to know his fate would be hard indeed, and yet suspense seemed more endurable than to stand by and read the cruel truth in Miss Bertram's eyes.

"Why should I go back to Saint Olave's?" was the burden of Mr. Graham's thoughts all the time he sat in the railway carriage, with his face towards London. "If she is engaged to that man, why should I undergo the torment of seeing her again?"

Easy question to put, not so easy to answer; for the next day, after despatching some important business in feverish haste, Mr. Graham was back at Saint Olave's long before Mrs. Fay's dinner-hour.

"Oh, you darling!" cried the lady, delighted. "You have not given me the slip, after all. And now, do tell me, have you some brilliant idea? I mean something that I can understand, you know."

They were standing in the flower-garden, Mr. Graham not having yet entered the house.

"Is that heavy stone balcony on the second floor very dear to you, Mrs. Fay?" he asked, looking up at it as he spoke. "Because I should like, if it were practicable, to remove it. The thing is modern and in bad taste."

"The stone window!" screamed Mrs. Fay, turning up her pointed chin at Mr. Graham. "You would not touch the stone window! Why, everyone goes up to look at the prospect. You must go up too. You need only open the door at the head of the stairs, and go straight in to the end room. You will find the window there. Miss Bertram never comes to see me but she runs up to have a look out. *I* have not been there for ten years. *I* don't care for prospects," added Mrs. Fay, with her shrill and unpleasant little laugh; "but you must not touch the stone window, if you please."

Mr. Graham bowed.

"Was Miss Bertram here the other day?" he asked, rather irrelevantly.

"Of course she was. You don't mean to say you did not see her? To be sure she and Professor Mortlock were together the whole time," added Mrs. Fay, thoughtfully.

Mr. Graham winced internally, but made no sign.

"Ah! you want to go to the library, I see," shrewdly said Mrs. Fay. "Well, Mr. Graham, I will not interfere with you any longer.

She waved her hand and left him, with the arrow she had launched still quivering in his heart. He did not go to the library—he wandered about the grounds restless and unhappy, until the sound of carriage wheels warned him that Mrs. Fay's guests were arriving. He then entered the house by a back door, went up to his room, dressed hastily, and instead of joining Mrs. Fay and her friends, made his way up to the stone window. She might be there. He could not miss that chance of seeing her alone. He went up the broad stairs; he entered a room that was almost dark, then another, then

one lit by a large window, rich with stained glass, and images of saints and martyrs taken from the ruined chapel. Azure that seemed to come from Paradise, gold, purple, and crimson of rarest hue, fell on the floor of polished oak at the feet of Mr. Graham. Pale, unearthly faces, with a strange yearning in their upraised look and clasped hands—a look that seems to have passed away from humanity, as if it had ceased to long for divine things—told him their story of love and faith in vain. It was as if he had ceased to feel the beauty of colour—as if he had forgotten that there is another world than this. Had she come, and was she gone, or was she coming still? The sound of a door, that opened and closed again, answered the question. He drew back. He felt sure it was she, and he was not mistaken. She came in quickly, with the light step of her years, and a rich rustling of silk, and the fragrance of the hot-house roses she wore in her bosom and in her hair came in with her too. Mr. Graham saw her fair face as she drew near, and he thought how like the lovely princess of the old fairy tales she looked in her radiant beauty.

"Allow me to open the window," said he, coming forward.

She gave a little start of surprise, which she quickly repressed. Her greeting was friendly, but quiet. The years which she had spent away from her own people and her own land had altered her strangely. She had not grown cold, but she had learned that love was no longer her supreme right, and the warmth and pretty insolence of a beloved child had left her entirely.

"I believe the prospect is a fine one," said Edward Graham, without attempting to follow her out on the narrow balcony.

"I only come to look at the sea," she answered simply.

She stepped out. He saw her slender figure looking dark on the warm evening sky as, turning to the east, she shaded her eyes with her hand, and gave a long wistful look at the low blue line which lay far away beyond the woodland landscape, resting beneath a pale ridge of clouds.

"You were looking for Saint Aubin?" he said, as she turned back.

She raised her eyes to his, and answered gravely:

"Yes, I look at the spot where I know it must be," and with a bend of her head she passed by him, and left him there.

When the door had closed upon her, he went out and looked too. The prospect was a fine one, but he did not care for it then. His thoughts flew back to the quaint Norman town, to the house of the Field of the Cloth of Gold, to the girl with the laughing face and the lively tongue, who had both amused and tormented him. Memory is a great deluder. She so holds her glass that we rarely see the past, unless with a light shed by the present. "She was charming even then," thought Edward Graham, and he forgot the tangled hair, the slip-shod feet, the incessant chatter of Lily Bertram. He forgot, too, that if she liked his company, he, alas! cared very little for hers, and with the injustice natural to his altered feelings, he felt aggrieved at the calmness with which she now met and left him. Was Professor Mortlock—oh! hateful thought!—was he the cause of the change?

In a fever of jealousy and unrest, Mr. Graham went down to Mrs. Fay's drawing-room. It had been the refectory of the monks of Saint Olave's three hundred years ago, and though successive generations had altered it strangely —though modern hangings, carpets, and furniture hardly suited those deep Gothic windows, and that arched and lofty roof—the size and noble height of the old room made it imposing still. But Edward Graham scarcely gave it a look—scarcely even did he let his eyes rest on Miss Bertram, so eager was he to know his fate at once.

There was no difficulty in singling out the Professor, since he was the only man present besides Mr. Graham. He stood on the hearth, with his hand thrust Napoleon-wise into the region of his heart, talking in a slow, didactic voice to the two ladies who sat on either side of him. One was Miss Mortlock, in her black cuirass, for like a knight of old she rarely doffed her armour, and the other was Miss Cowper, so frilled, so puffed, and so dressed out as to be almost invisible. Mr. Graham bowed to the ladies, and Miss Mortlock hastened to perform the ceremony of introduction.

"Mr. Graham, I am happy to introduce you to my brother, Professor Mortlock," she said, with stately patronage. "Mr. Graham," she added, addressing her brother, "hopes to contribute his stone towards the noble edifice by building our college."

"I am happy to make Mr. Graham's acquaintance," kindly said the Professor.

Mr. Graham bowed coldly, and looked down on a man who was barely thirty-five, who was actually handsome, though he wore glasses, but who was so deplorably short that jealousy vanished at his aspect. That Miss Bertram should give even a look of her beautiful eyes to this absurdly under-sized creature seemed impossible to Edward Graham in the pride of his six feet. "An actual pigmy," thought he, still gazing down on him; "no woman in her senses could think of him for a moment." Moreover, when the Professor had talked five minutes, Mr. Graham felt that Mrs. Fay had not overstated matters when she stigmatized him as a fool.

"We mean our college to be a grand thing, Mr. Graham," said Professor Mortlock, with much dignity.

Miss Cowper, remembering, perhaps, that her money was to build "our college," thought she might put in a word.

"I am determined to raise woman," she said, "and a regenerating college is the earnest purpose of my life, Mr. Graham."

"A noble purpose," struck in the Professor, "and I am proud to say, my dear madam, that you owe it to me. Woman is a most potent agent in social life, of which the only solid basis is science," continued the Professor, "and as priestcraft is the natural enemy of science" (the Professor was a very open and outspoken man), "and as women are unfortunately priest-ridden——"

Mr. Graham frowned. Was the man a gentleman?

Miss Cowper did not seem affronted, but she interrupted this lucid explanation by peremptorily remarking,

"Not all, Professor Mortlock."

The Professor, who was apt to go astray when he was interrupted, looked annoyed, and said with some sharpness,

"My dear Miss Cowper, your partiality for your sex is commendable, but I am sorry to

assure you that nine women out of ten are priest-ridden. It is their nature to be led, and——"

"I am sure it is not mine," again interrupted Miss Cowper, speaking warmly; "I could never endure being led, even when I was a baby."

"An admirable spirit," said the Professor, with something like a polite sneer, "but a certain reverend pastor had other hopes, and actually boasted of what he was going to make a lady do for an asylum, I believe, or something or other. Of course, there was not a word of truth in it," continued the Professor, as Miss Cowper became very red and sat up in her chair, "but allow me to assure you that woman, as woman, requires severe training before she acquires the moral courage to break through the bonds of priestcraft and learns to be free. Excuse me, I know what you are going to say," remarked the Professor, authoritatively silencing Miss Cowper, who evidently wanted to protest, "and I assure you again that I have studied the matter too profoundly not to be master of my subject."

The Professor looked convinced that Miss Cowper had not a word to say for herself. The

lady, however, was of another opinion, and would certainly have answered him if Miss Mortlock, kindly pressing her hand, had not remarked, with evident compassion for her moral and intellectual weakness,

"Do not, my dear; you know you never can beat the Professor in argument."

In short, it was plain that Miss Cowper, in order to escape being priest-ridden, must learn liberty under the wholesome discipline of Professor Mortlock.

"What, at it again!" cried Mrs. Fay, who sat at the other end of the room talking to Miss Bertram. "I will not hear a word about the regeneration of woman until dinner is over—not a word, Professor Mortlock. My dear Miss Cowper, do not, I entreat you. You do not know what a deplorable effect argument has upon me. I always believe the last speaker, which is absurd."

The Professor laughed as heartily as if Mrs. Fay had uttered the most brilliant speech; and his sister murmured, half aloud, "So clever!"

Disgust for the Professor's reasoning, and contempt for his person and manner, would

have kept Mr. Graham silent even if the mistress of the house had not so peremptorily closed the discussion. And now the two last guests—two single gentlemen of more than middle age, who had been asked to take as many ladies in to dinner—made their appearance. They were both bald, both red-faced, and both stout in person, and evidently, so far as any dangerous admiration of Miss Bertram's beauty went, *hors de combat.* Edward Graham gave them a look, then thought of them no more. Surely, despising the man as he did, he might have seen the Professor give his arm to Miss Bertram and sit by her side with equal indifference. But this was not in his power. In vain Miss Mortlock and Miss Cowper, between whom he sat, talked to him about the college all dinner time; he answered them at random. His eyes could not leave the two at the other end of the table. Miss Bertram was evidently both gay and amused, and the Professor, who did not look so short as he really was when sitting, wore on his handsome face an expression of such placid content, that Edward Graham would have liked to annihilate him.

"Is it possible she should care for the man?"

he thought, angrily. "Surely no woman in her senses would!"

And then that tormenting demon who sits in a jealous man's heart reminded him that women are not always in their senses, and that Titania herself, who, as Queen of the Fairies, ought to have known better, had doted on Bottom, spite his ass's ears.

The bitterness of these thoughts was so far wholesome that when dinner was over, and Mrs. Fay's guests met once more in the drawing-room, when he saw that Miss Bertram, though perfectly polite and amiable, had scarcely a look for him, Mr. Graham asked himself if it were not still time to withdraw from the fatal snare of her beauty? He felt that this love, unless fully requited, would surely be the crowning misfortune of his life—that it would rob him of all energy and all strength of purpose, and mayhap leave him wrecked at last on those shores of honour and success which it had been the ambition of his life to reach.

"I shall leave Saint Olave's to-morrow," thought he; "and come back no more. Mrs. Fay's wings and Miss Cowper's college must find some other man. I will not give myself up to this madness!"

So spoke Prudence; but when, after the guests were gone, after he had taken a last look of Miss Bertram's lovely face, and felt her little gloved hand rest within his with the friendliness of old acquaintance, when his heart was still throbbing with the pain of what might be a final parting, Mrs. Fay said to him, "Are not those Mortlocks horrid?" he revived a little, and his dark eyes sparkled.

"The man is not a gentleman," continued Mrs. Fay. "There are plenty of people I suppose who would not care to have him, but," added she, with her easy insolence, "what difference does it make to *me?* And then I like to see him making a fool of himself with little Miss Bertram. She will never have him, you know. By-the-by, Mr. Graham, I cannot let you go for a week," she added suddenly.

"Then, if you cannot, Mrs. Fay," answered he, smiling, and his dark face glowing, "I suppose I must stay."

He forgot the work that was waiting for him; he forgot that though she did not care for the Professor, she might not, therefore, care for him. He forgot all, save that he should have the exquisite delight of seeing her again.

A week, a blissful week, was before him. In a week, what might not occur? And in one sense he was right. This week was so far eventful that none other left such deep traces in his life.

CHAPTER VII.

FOUR days had gone by.

Mr. Graham had had long and rather trying conversations with Mrs. Fay. Although, by so doing he nearly drove that lady wild, he had other conversations at Cowper's Hill with Miss Cowper and Miss Mortlock. He worked hard at the wings of the one lady, and at the college of the other two. He was on the watch from morning till night. His eyes were ever ready to see, his ears ever ready to hear; and yet, to his secret wrath and despair, Miss Bertram remained invisible. This was not so strange after all; his business was not with Miss Bertram; but Mr. Graham, who stayed at Saint Olave's for her sake, felt wronged and exasperated. And then he had not an easy life of it. Mrs. Fay and Miss Mortlock, in

whose hands Miss Cowper was a passive instrument, gave him no peace. The rivalry between these two ladies ran so high that Mr. Graham would have found it impossible to stand well with both, if the extreme eagerness of each to keep a hold upon him had not proved his safeguard.

"I'll not let you go, you know," Mrs. Fay said, with her insolent frankness. "Mortlock shan't have you."

Whilst Miss Mortlock imperiously declared that Mr. Graham could not allow the regeneration of woman to stand still for so contemptible a matter as Mrs. Fay's two wings. So intent were the two ladies on prevailing over each other, that the existence of other architects besides Edward Graham did not seem to occur to them. In her anxiety to make sure of Mr. Graham's exclusive services, Mrs. Fay bethought herself of her old friend Mrs. Graham. "Dear me," thought she, "I must have her here."

So she wrote off to her dear Mrs. Graham, entreating her, for the sake of Auld Lang Syne, to come and spend a week at Saint Olave's. "It would be such a treat to see her again, especially as her nephew, Mr. Graham—such a

superior man!—was now at Saint Olave's. She —Mrs. Fay—was adding two wings to the Abbey," and so on. Unluckily for Mrs. Fay's plans, Mrs. Graham had just sprained her ankle when she got that letter.

"Oh, she has found out that there is something in Ned," thought Mr. Graham's aunt, indignantly. "She might have discovered *that* a little earlier in the day. Pity I cannot see the boy there tumbling the old place about."

Mrs. Graham's ideas of architecture were of the levelling kind; so, with a sigh of regret, she wrote back to Mrs. Fay. She was so much obliged to her old friend Laura; but she had sprained her ankle, and could not stir; and would Mrs. Fay be kind enough not to say a word of this to her nephew? He was such a good boy that he might leave everything to come down and see her.

"The dear old goose actually believes it!" ejaculated Mrs. Fay, as she put Mrs. Graham's note by; and yet, lest Mrs. Graham should not have over-estimated Mr. Graham's affectionate interest in her welfare, she prudently told him nothing of Mrs. Graham's accident.

Mr. Graham spent an unconscionable time at

Cowper's Hill the next morning. Mrs. Fay felt that if she did not adopt strong measures, he would be taken out of her hands. She wanted to go to town and see Léocadie, who was behaving abominably about that cachemirienne. Why should she not call on Mrs. Graham, and carry her off, sprain and all? "If it is a sprain!" thought Mrs. Fay, who was too much accustomed to white lies not to be of a sceptical turn.

But we all know what Léocadie is. Mrs. Fay, who drove to her first, wheedled, coaxed, threatened, and entreated, for an hour and more; then, having wrung from her a reluctant pledge that the cachemirienne should be forthcoming next week, she drove off to Hammersmith, and paid her old friend a brief, and, so to speak, breathless visit.

She found Mrs. Graham in her pleasant parlour, knitting in the window, with her feet up on a stool. It was a real sprain, after all.

"My dearest creature," said she, rushing at once on the topic uppermost in her mind, "I am so glad to see you again, but so vexed about that horrid sprain. You don't mean that you don't know me! Why, I am Laura—Laura

Fay. You must come down to Saint Olave's. It will do you all the good in the world. The air of Saint Olave's is the best air in England."

"For a sprain!" said Mrs. Graham, raising her eyebrows.

"For sprains, broken arms and legs, and everything of that sort," audaciously said Mrs. Fay, "so you must come. Tell your maid to pack up a few things, and come with me at once. We have just time to catch the express."

"No, Laura, thank you," composedly answered Mrs. Graham. "I like staying here best. And how is that boy getting on?" she asked, with a sudden fondness in her voice.

"Oh!" irritably answered Mrs. Fay, "he is a great nuisance, that boy of yours. What business has he to be always at Miss Cowper's, talking to that awful bore of a Miss Mortlock about their nonsensical college? But I know; it is all for Miss Bertram."

"Miss Bertram! Do you mean little Lily?" cried Mrs. Graham, her blue eyes sparkling. "A tall slip of a girl, whose hair is always tangled, and whose slippers are down at heel! Do you mean her?"

"No, no," cried Mrs. Fay, with an impatient rap of her fan, "I mean Miss Bertram—though Jones is her real name—of Saint What-d'ye-call-'em, in France, quite a little heiress, and a beauty, too, according to some people, but I don't think so; and Mr. Graham is dangling after her, instead of seeing about my wings, and I find it a nuisance."

"Is it possible that little Lily Bertram is a beauty?" exclaimed Mrs. Graham, amazed.

"I tell you I don't think so; but she has a colour, and——"

"And you think Ned actually likes her?" said Mrs. Graham, clasping her hands at the thought. "My goodness! what a pity he did not marry her all these years!"

Here was a discovery for Mrs. Fay. Miss Bertram and Mr. Graham were old acquaintances.

"How sly of them," said she, sharply, "how very sly!"

"And do you think they are actually in love with each other?" asked Mrs. Graham, with her point-blank way of putting a question.

"Oh, dear, no!" said Mrs. Fay, laughing until her eyes twinkled. "It is only dangling!

But, my dear creature, if you will not come, I must run off, or I shall miss the train."

She rose to go, but Fate had willed it otherwise. A double-knock announced the presence of visitors.

"Two ladies, ma'am," said the maid, opening the parlour door, and as she moved back to let them pass, Miss Cowper and Miss Mortlock both walked in.

Mrs. Fay sat down again. She knew they had come to take away Mrs. Graham, and she resolved to miss the train, to miss dinner, to miss everything save sitting them out, and she at once declared her intention.

"Now there's a coincidence," said she, in her airy fashion. "I come to see dear Mrs. Graham, you come to see Mrs. Graham; but you don't go back to Cowper's Hill by the train? Yes. Well, then, so do I. Charming, and most amusing."

"I came to town on business of importance," said Miss Cowper, with some solemnity. She had come to ask Mrs. Graham to Cowper's Hill, being urged to this politic step by Miss Mortlock, "and of course I could not be in London without calling on Mrs. Graham."

"Just my case," said Mrs. Fay, still speaking airily. "How hot London is to-day!"

"London is always vile," said Miss Cowper, sententiously.

"My dear Miss Cowper," exclaimed Miss Mortlock, remonstratively, "think of what London is: the very centre of the intellectual world. It was in London that Professor Mortlock discovered——"

"Did he, really?" interrupted Mrs. Fay. "How interesting!"

"Discovered the new moral law," continued Miss Mortlock, getting very red. "And a place where Professor Mortlock——"

"Of course not," again interrupted Mrs. Fay, fanning herself. "I call that self-evident."

Mrs. Graham stared, but Miss Cowper, who was rather dull, only felt that Mrs. Fay would not go away, and that, if they stayed much longer, they would certainly not be at Cowper's Hill in time for dinner. So, without giving Miss Mortlock time to utter a retort, she said to Mrs. Graham,

"We have such good air at Cowper's Hill!"

"Yes," innocently answered Mrs. Graham;

"and Mrs. Fay says it is so good for sprains, broken limbs, and all that."

After such a speech it was useless for Mrs. Fay to attempt concealing the real object of her visit, so she said at once,

"Yes, my dear Mrs. Graham, we have beautiful air, so do try Saint Olave's."

"And if you would begin by Cowper's Hill," remarked Miss Cowper, "you would see Miss Bertram again. She often speaks of you."

"Dear little Lily," said Mrs. Graham, brightening. Then, with her usual candour, she added, "It seems that silly fellow, Edward Graham, is quite smitten with her."

"An old goose, if ever there was one!" thought Mrs. Fay; whilst Miss Cowper, staring in calm indignation, uttered a solemn protest.

"I cannot believe it. Miss Bertram," she severely added, "is to think of nothing of the kind whilst she is under my care."

"I only said dangling, you dear, indiscreet creature," said Mrs. Fay, tapping Mrs. Graham with her fan, and winking hard at her, so that Miss Mortlock, who sat in silenced and outraged dignity, should not fail in intercepting and interpreting the signal. "She is a lovely girl,

and Mr. Graham dangles after her whilst he is talking about the college. Men like to dangle."

"Not Ned," said Mrs. Graham, shaking her head. "There is no dangling about Ned."

"Very well, then, he don't dangle," pleasantly said Mrs. Fay. "Miss Cowper, Miss Mortlock, are you going home this evening? Yes —well, then, suppose I drive you both to the station," she coaxingly added. "I always have my own carriage in London, you know—one of my whims."

This was a fact; and Mrs. Fay's horses were so good, her carriage was so comfortable, and it was so useless to try to sit her out, that Miss Cowper, who wanted her dinner, and Miss Mortlock, who wanted to keep a sharp eye on Miss Bertram, by her secretly destined to the Professor, yielded to Fate, and went off with Mrs. Fay, leaving Mrs. Graham thoughtful and perplexed. How kind those people were; but how sudden was their kindness. Mrs. Fay and Miss Cowper had done without Mrs. Graham all these years, and now the dear kind souls wanted her so badly.

"And yet even if I had not sprained my

ankle, I do not think I should have gone," thought Mrs. Graham, rubbing her nose; "yet I should like to see Lily Bertram, dear little Lily. I wish they had brought her; and so she is a beauty, and Ned likes her. Poor Lily Scot!"

There is a tacit understanding which does as well as any spoken compact. The three ladies did not utter the name of Miss Bertram as they went together to Saint Olave's and Cowper's Hill, but each knew what the two other thought, and each resolved that Mr. Graham should not have many opportunities of dangling after Miss Bertram from that day forth. And thus it came to pass that when he called at Cowper's Hill, Miss Bertram was either out or engaged; and that when she went to Saint Olave's, she was so effectually kept out of his way that he knew nothing of it till she was gone.

This lasted four days. On the fifth, Mr. Graham resolved that he would bear it no longer. The morning was calm and fair. He took the *Times* out with him, and walked into the grounds. As he went through the high ferns, all sparkling with dew under the young shadow of the

broad beeches and strong oaks, he brooded bitterly over his folly.

"I am only wasting life away," thought he. "Even if I saw her, what good would it do me? I am only losing those precious hours with which other men are now going to win both fame and money."

An article in the *Times*, which had caught his careless eye as he walked along reading, but thinking of Lily Bertram all the time, had so far compelled his attention as to suggest this sad and philosophic conclusion. From this article it appeared that a Polish prince of immense wealth had recently died in Paris, that he had left a will, by the provisions of which the greatest portion of his property was devoted to charities, and a large sum was set apart for the building of a funeral chapel in the cemetery of Père la Chaise, to be erected over his remains. Wishing this chapel to be all that architectural and sculptural art could make it, the prince had determined that both the chapel and the monument should be open to competition amongst all the architects and sculptors of the day, ten of the most eminent men of either profession acting as umpires, and to tempt even men of

known genius and fame to compete, the prizes awarded for the best drawings and models were munificent.

"A hundred thousand francs—four thousand pounds for the chapel," thought Edward Graham, pausing beneath the cedar-tree, as he turned back to the abbey, and looking dreamily at the little lake before him. "It would have been the making of me when I came here ten years ago, for then thought and leisure were worth very little to me, whereas now, if some other man should win the prize, my time and my labour would both be lost. Besides, I should think of and do nothing else—leave this place at once, affront Mrs. Fay, and perhaps never see *her* again, until I found her married to some Professor Mortlock or other."

The cruel fear won the day. Why risk so much for a doubtful good? What did he want with money? Did he not earn plenty? But then the honour, the fame, whispered ambition. He had been successful, he had been praised and spoken well of, but he knew in his heart that he had not yet shown what he could do, and set his name on any work of note. Nothing would remain to tell future generations, "This

was a man." Such a monument as this, erected in a famous place in a great city, was even more a prize for glory than for four thousand pounds. The thought set his brain on fire. Looking at the lake, he saw with the mind's eye a Gothic chapel, white as alabaster, rise from its still waters, and shine in the morning sun. Its slender and graceful columns supported a light canopy, beneath which the Polish noble slept on a bed of stone, with the cross which his forefathers had borne so high against the Turkish infidel clasped on his breast.

"Oh! what a noble—what a grand thing I could make of it!" thought Edward Graham, walking up and down in a sudden fever, from which every dream of love had vanished. "I will—I must risk it!"

A heavy foot creaked on the gravel. Mrs. Fay's footman, in sober livery, and with the gravity of his station written in his stolid face, was coming towards him.

"Mrs. Fay's compliments to Mr. Graham, and would he kindly let her have the *Times* for Miss Bertram, who wanted to see something in it?"

No oracle spoken by Fate was ever more potent. The warm blood rushed to Edward

Graham's olive face, and dyed it crimson. He had forgotten her, for a moment only, but he had forgotten her, and all the time she was there, in that house near which he stood; and though he could not intrude on her presence, he could so loiter near the door through which she would come forth, that he must see her—walk with her to the gate, perhaps—at least, look in her face as she went by. The Gothic chapel, with its fair white columns and its light arches, the dead prince sleeping for ever with the cross on his breast, vanished at the thought. They faded into the air before that fervid vision of love as the morning mists, which were floating away from the quiet lake, melted before the warm sun. Edward Graham forgot all, save that for four days he had not looked in her face, and that now the chance he was staying at Saint Olave's for had come at last.

Miss Bertram's visit to Mrs. Fay was a very long one. In vain Mr. Graham walked up and down in front of the house; then, fearful of attracting attention, went and sat on a bench in the avenue. She did not appear. He lingered under the shadow of the broad trees in a fever of impatience, which left no freshness in

the morning for him, and the irritation of his disappointment was getting beyond endurance, when the nimble little figure of Mrs. Fay stepped out through one of the dining-room windows, opened a sunshade, and flitted about the flower-beds—alone. The truth flashed upon him—Miss Bertram was gone! Had this been done on purpose? Burning with useless wrath, and vainly trying to smooth his dark brow, he went up to the mistress of the house, and made an effort to say carelessly,

"I thought Miss Bertram was with you."

Mrs. Fay raised her eyebrows, and perked up her chin.

"Miss Bertram!" said she—"why, she has been gone ages. She left as soon as she got the *Times*. I hope you do not want it. She will send it back in an hour. I wonder you did not see her," perversely continued Mrs. Fay; "we saw you quite well walking up and down in front of the house. Were you waiting for her? I should not wonder if that were not why she asked to go out through the library. Take my advice, Mr. Graham," kindly continued Mrs. Fay, daintily offering him a rosebud, "put that sly little Miss Bertram out of

your head, and do not let her make fun of you. Mind the thorns—they prick."

It is well that good-breeding is such a despot, and bends the proudest and the sternest—ay, and the angriest too, of a certain class, at least —to its iron will. Mr. Graham had to bear this impertinence, and not retaliate. His foe was a lady, and he could not say to her, "You have done this on purpose against me. I do my best to please and serve you, and you would blight my life and its dearest hopes for your own selfish pleasure. She is nothing to you—you do not care whom she marries. Her weal or woe are of less value in your eyes than the flower you have given me in mere mockery, and yet you would rob me of all I care for—and for what—for what?"

These were Mr. Graham's angry thoughts whilst he took Mrs. Fay's rosebud, and looked in her faded face, and read mischievous amusement in her twinkling eyes, He would not, however, have deigned to answer her unkind speech, if she had not added, coaxingly:

"Are you going in to draw? Am I to see anything new to-day?"

"I fear not," he answered, stung into rebel-

lion. "I must leave by the two o'clock train."

There is something in the calm sternness of a man's will which subdues a certain order of women as completely as if their frail fingers were crushed in his strong careless hand. Mr. Graham was so quietly determined, so evidently resolved not to be moved from his purpose, that Mrs. Fay was cowed at once, and said piteously:

"And when will you come back?"

"I really cannot say," answered Mr. Graham, in a tone which meant, "Perhaps never."

Mrs. Fay could have cried with vexation. "I should have liked to slap that man in the face," she declared later.

"But you will do something to that poor drawing, to that poor elevation," she persisted—"something before two o'clock. Let me, at least, see those two unfortunate wings on paper."

"I fear even that is not in my power," replied the inflexible architect. "I shall have no time. I must call on Miss Bertram. I am going to France, and she may have some message which I could deliver—some errand which I can fulfil. I am sorry to disappoint you, Mrs. Fay, but as soon as I can spare a day or two, I

shall see about your two wings," graciously added Mr. Graham.

Mrs. Fay looked lugubrious.

"But I want more than that," said she —"I want to talk to you about the rooms in those wings. I want you to be here on the spot, and put it all in train. I want to have no worry about it at all," said Mrs. Fay, raising her shrill voice.

"Very natural," confessed Mr. Graham, looking amused.

"And when will you come back from France?" she asked, crossly.

Unfortunately, Mr. Graham only knew that he was going—he had no conception of the time when he should return.

"And you are going to call on Miss Bertram now?" This was said very indignantly.

Yes, Mr. Graham was going to call on Miss Bertram.

"You will not see her," coolly declared Mrs. Fay. "Miss Mortlock is keeping her up for Professor Mortlock, and I will wager my two wings," triumphantly added Mrs. Fay, "that you will not see Miss Bertram to-day."

"Then I shall write to her," answered Mr.

Graham, hiding his secret irritation under a calm smile.

"Dear me!" cried Mrs. Fay, as if struck with a sudden thought—"would you mind taking just three lines to Miss Mortlock? It would be such a kindness, Mr. Graham."

"Now what is the wicked little fairy thinking of?" wondered Mr. Graham, even whilst he civilly declared that he should be charmed to be Mrs. Fay's messenger.

"I shall not detain you a moment," said Mrs. Fay, tripping into the house; indeed, she soon came back with a slip of paper in her hand. "Oh! you may read it," said she, handing it to him with the twinkle in her eye—"indeed, you must read it. I would have given you the message, only I do not think you would have delivered it honestly."

Mr. Graham cast his eyes on the daintily small, though erratic writing of Mrs. Fay, and read the following lines:—

"DEAR MISS MORTLOCK,—Please to tell Miss Bertram that I have changed my mind, and shall stay at home next week. Mr. Graham says he is going away this afternoon—keep him, if you can."

Mr. Graham smiled.

"And do you think Miss Mortlock will keep me, if you cannot, Mrs. Fay?" he asked.

"She is a very superior person," answered Mrs. Fay, demurely quoting his own words; then, with some uneasiness—"You will be sure to give my note to Miss Mortlock—you won't cheat?"

Mr. Graham laughed, and protested he was incapable of such treason; but though he laughed, he walked away with keen resentment at his heart. How sure Mrs. Fay was that he would be foiled in the object of his visit! Was it a settled thing that he was never even to look in Lily Bertram's face? Were these two women, who detested each other, and whose rivalry had both provoked and amused him, agreed against him in that one point?

On reaching Cowper's Hill, he found that Mrs. Fay had not exaggerated matters. The footman was not sure whether Miss Bertram was at home or not, but would see.

Mr. Graham was shown into the sitting-room where, a few days before—was it only a few days?—his fate had met him under Miss Bertram's witching aspect. He sat down where

he had sat, and again looked out at the deep gloom of the old trees; but this time no fair face, no graceful form, came in to break on his meditations. Miss Mortlock alone appeared, gracious, indeed, but most unwelcome.

"So sorry both Miss Cowper and Miss Bertram are out," she said, with a smile; "but *I* am quite at your orders, Mr. Graham. Some new idea about the college, I suppose? I shall be so happy to give you my best attention. Dear Miss Cowper is very delicate, and I feel it a duty to relieve her as far as I can."

So saying, Miss Mortlock sat down, gave a little hitch to the black cuirass, which was decidedly awry, and taking out her pencil and note-book, she prepared to listen to Mr. Graham's new idea. He heard her out; all the time she was speaking, his eyes were fastened on the vista of trees before him, watching the glimmer of a light skirt far away. He saw it going farther and farther, and he knew that with it vanished his last solitary chance of seeing Miss Bertram. Mrs. Fay was right—she had been sent out of his way.

"I am sorry to disappoint you," said he. Alas! what a prodigious number of untruths lie

at the door of that fair, false dame, Politeness! —"But the fact is that I came, on the contrary, to say good-bye."

Miss Mortlock was amazed—indeed, more amazed at first than angry. It seemed impossible that Mr. Graham should desert the college. Of course, if he was going, he would soon return. But Mr. Graham would not pledge himself. He was going to France, to Saint Aubin, probably, and he had asked to see Miss Bertram in order to offer her his services.

"Oh, Miss Bertram has nothing to do with that miserable little Norman place now," impatiently said Miss Mortlock. "I hope we have weaned her from all that. Miss Bertram, indeed, does not appreciate the college. Only what can you expect from a girl reared up in a convent? But I trust she has given up Saint Aubin. And surely, my dear Mr. Graham, you cannot leave us in the lurch to go there? My brother, Professor Mortlock, is going to give a series of lectures in all the great towns of England, Miss Cowper, Miss Bertram, and I accompanying him, of course. We leave this evening, and we really want to have that matter of the college settled by the time of our return."

But, though Mr. Graham was perfectly civil and conventional, he was also cool and inexorable as a rock, and could not be moved from his resolve of leaving Saint Olave's by the two o'clock train.

"But, Mr. Graham, you ought to consider," said Miss Mortlock, with some heat. "Miss Cowper is a most excellent person; but it is very hard to bring her to the point; and if you go now, the college may just end in nothing."

Mr. Graham, remembering the almshouses, smiled, confessed such might be the case, but remained obdurate, even though he delivered Mrs. Fay's note, which, as confirming his departure, Miss Mortlock read with much chagrin. In short, so far as the college was concerned, the interview ended as unsatisfactorily as Mr. Graham's attempt to see Miss Bertram, and that such was the case was the comfort he derived from his visit at Cowper's Hill.

He went back to Saint Olave's sad and depressed. It is all very well to say that Faint Heart never won Fair Lady; but when Fair Lady is made inaccessible to Faint Heart by all

the conventionalities of civilized life, Faint Heart has a very poor chance indeed, and he knows it.

"How can I even let her guess what she is to me, when I cannot so much as see her?" thought he, despondently. "A princess would scarcely be more out of my reach now than that little Lily Bertram, who was always by my side in the days gone by."

If anything could add to his torment, it was this contrast between the past and the present, the remembrance of what might so easily have been, the bitter consciousness of what was. He found Mrs. Fay lying in wait for him when he returned to the abbey.

"Well," she cried, breathlessly, "has Miss Mortlock prevailed upon you?"

"That was impossible," he civilly answered.

"You gave her my note, of course?"

Mr. Graham had done so, of course.

"And you saw Miss Bertram?" innocently asked the lady.

Mr. Graham drily confessed that he had not had that pleasure.

"And yet you told her that you were leaving by the two o'clock train?"

Mr. Graham, whose patience was sorely tried by this cross-examination, merely bowed.

"Too bad of Miss Mortlock," resumed Mrs. Fay, her eyes twinkling with amusement. "Come now," she coaxingly added, "shall I be the good fairy? Go to town for the day, and come back to-morrow. I shall have Miss Bertram to dinner. You can have your talk with her, and go away again by the eleven o'clock train, if you like. You will probably travel with Professor Mortlock and the two ladies. They are all going to town for the lectures. Only naughty little Miss Bertram stays behind with me."

He looked at her in eager and breathless hope. Was she deluding him, or did she speak the truth?

"There it is, all settled," said Mrs. Fay, avoiding his look. "You go to-day, come back to-morrow to dinner, and leave by the eleven o'clock train, if you still have that crotchet of going to France. So nice! Never say that I am an ill-tempered fairy after that."

And without giving him time to answer, Mrs. Fay walked away. The bait was not one which Edward Graham had the fortitude to resist.

To see her again, to be in the same house with her, to have every chance which daily intercourse can give! Ah! Mrs. Fay knew what she was doing when she set this trap for him!

Of course he went to town, and of course, too, he came back long before Mrs. Fay's dinner hour; but he did not see Miss Bertram until he entered the drawing-room a few minutes before the bell rang. And she was there, sitting by Mrs. Fay's chair, with the fading sunlight casting its warm radiance around her brown hair, and giving even more than its usual light and life to her lovely face.

He had meant to be quite cool and calm, but it was not in his power. The blood rushed to his heart, and left his olive cheek almost colourless as he saw her. She looked slightly surprised, but perfectly collected.

"Ah! you did not think to see Mr. Graham," said Mrs. Fay, airily. "Well, my dear, since you are going to stay with me whilst the Professor and the two ladies are lecturing, you can study architecture under Mr. Graham. The dear creature is not going to France after all. He has changed his mind, and will see about my two wings," added Mrs. Fay.

And now was the real crisis of Edward Graham's fate. He had but to say a word, abide by his first resolve, turn his back on Saint Olave's, and thus break the bonds of a passion too ardent to promise him aught save sorrow —he had but to do this to be free. There would have been a sharp pang, but once it was over, all would have been well again. Had he not life, its ambition, its struggles, its troubles, and its rewards before him? All this he knew. He knew, too, that by remaining he was risking in some degree the pride and the dignity of his manhood. Mrs. Fay, bent on keeping him, had, like a cunning spider, woven this web for his unwary feet. She was tempting him cruelly and unworthily, as she had baulked him before for her own ends. It stung him to read the twinkle of amusement in her eye. He read, too, the vague wonder in Lily Bertram's face—a wonder that told him how unexpected, how unwelcome, perhaps, was this change of plans. But what availed it all? His silence implied the fullest consent. Passion was stronger than prudence, than pride, than aught else in Edward Graham's heart. She had her day and her hour. He would struggle against her, but it

would be too late. She would have left upon him that sign of an all-engrossing feeling which no after-years can ever efface.

CHAPTER VIII.

AND now there followed for Mr. Graham a strange life of fever, love, work, and unrest. He saw Miss Bertram daily, but Miss Bertram had grown shy, and kept very much in her room; and Mrs. Fay, though she had used Miss Bertram as a lure, by no means intended that this young lady should usurp the place of her two wings. Moreover, Mr. Graham had business in town, which compelled him to go to and fro constantly, and he invariably learnt when he came back that the golden opportunity he longed for had been whilst he was away. But the patience that knows how to wait, the strong will that knows how to watch, can do much. A few chances Mr. Graham succeeded in getting, and he made the best of them; and to Mrs. Fay's ill-concealed wrath these chances evi-

dently took up Mr. Graham's whole mind and leisure whilst they lasted.

"Of all bores in a house, a man in love is decidedly the greatest," thought Mrs. Fay, in her exasperation; "but I may thank myself—I ought to have known better. I ought to have known that I had no chance of my two wings whilst Mr. Graham was mooning after that sly little Miss Bertram."

There was some truth in the accusation. Mr. Graham's wings were like Penelope's web. In his fear of finishing his task too quickly and having to leave Miss Bertram's presence, he was either always undoing what he had done, or suggesting improvements which first pleased, then perplexed, and finally provoked Mrs. Fay. If she had only known when he was right, she would have stopped him and said, "That will do," but she felt too fearful of committing some fatal mistake to do more than worry her guest, and herself too, to her heart's content. He wanted to make love to Miss Bertram, did he! He was staying at Saint Olave's for that, was he! Well, she, Mrs. Fay, would allow of no such thing, and he should have her society as well as Miss Bertram's. Accordingly she pun-

ished herself by interfering with Mr. Graham's desires in every way she could. It was very disagreeable, of course, but there was some comfort in it; it made him miserable! Love, however, is full of wiles, and Mr. Graham eluded the lady's watchfulness in the most provoking manner. The irritating contest did not render him, however, more docile to the lady's wishes, nor willing to please her, and it was generally when she had baulked him in some perverse manner or other, that Mr. Graham discovered those imperfections in his original design which caused Mrs. Fay to wish that she had never thought of her two wings, and even made her wonder sometimes why she did not give them up altogether.

And how did Miss Bertram feel or act between these two? One ever bent on seeking her presence, the other on disappointing him perpetually? It was hard to say. If she saw Mr. Graham's admiration, she never betrayed that she did so. If she was aware that Mrs. Fay interfered with it, or reduced it to that unspoken language over which she had no control, Miss Bertram showed neither pleasure nor discontent. She neither sought nor avoided the

friend of her youth. She seemed pleased to see him, but she did not appear to miss him when he was not by. There was no sign of regret in her face when he left a room, no sudden lighting up when he entered it again. "She does not care one pin about him," thought Mrs. Fay with vindictive satisfaction, and, alas! Mr. Graham was well-nigh driven to despair by coming to the same conclusion ten times a day. And yet he did his best. Love has many subtle arts, and Mr. Graham was too desperately in love not to know them all by intuition. One of them lay in evoking the past every time he could do so. He had been quick to perceive that this past, concerning which she was so silent, was very dear to Miss Bertram. Her dark eyes would grow dreamy, her pretty mouth would smile tenderly, when he made some gentle and remote allusion to Saint Aubin. He avoided all painful topics, but such as were pleasant and cheerful he was ever bringing up in some fashion or other, and one morning he ventured, for the first time, on reminding her that, in that past so dear to her, he, too, had had a part. He had seen her in the garden, walking slowly through the gay flower-beds, and Mrs.

Fay, detecting his look (they were both in the library), had perversely said, "No, Mr. Graham, not now, if you please; my claim is prior to Miss Bertram's."

Mr. Graham had submitted, chafing inwardly, but relief had come under the shape of a morning visitor. Mrs. Fay, though much provoked, had left him, and, of course, Mr. Graham had at once walked out and joined Miss Bertram.

Her greeting was friendly, but he fancied she would as soon have been alone as have had his society. He did his best to entertain her, and she heard him with courteous attention, but she spoke little in return.

"You are very silent now, Miss Bertram," he could not help saying.

"Am I?" and she looked at him wondering; for we are seldom conscious of such changes in ourselves.

"You were so different in Saint Aubin," he persisted.

"I was a child, Mr. Graham."

"You always had some pretty story or other to tell me then," he resumed, and there was something like reproach in his tone.

"I believe I was a great chatterbox," she answered, carelessly.

"No, no," he denied; "but you did tell me pretty stories."

"What a dreadful little torment I must have been," said she, laughing outright; and the sweet, clear laugh made Edward Graham's heart leap like some joyous music, all the more welcome for being so long unheard.

"A torment!—you were delightful company," he answered, both warmly and sincerely; for we readily forget unwelcome truths. "There was something so perfectly original and fresh in all you said," he tenderly added.

"And did you really like it?" she asked, looking at him in some doubt.

"I would give anything—anything to go back to that time," he said, so vehemently, for he thought of his lost chances, that though she could not understand his meaning, she blushed like a rose.

And so they stood silent for a moment, face to face, with the flowers in the garden opening their fragrant bosoms to the sun, with the gay hum of insects in the air, and a soft twittering of birds in the neighbouring trees—so they stood, feeling that something had been told, though what it really was Lily Bertram could

not have said; and Edward Graham himself scarcely knew. The bright blush died from her cheek, her eyes became absent and dreamy, as they often did when he spake thus of the old bygones. She seemed to be looking back into the past, seeking there the last joyousness of her youth.

"It is all so long ago," she said, with a half sigh; and without looking at him any more, with her eyes bent on the earth, she slowly walked away. He watched her graceful figure, her long gown trailing on the gravel path, till she entered the old abbey and vanished. "It is all so long ago!" His heart sank within him—the words seemed his sentence, that something beyond which there can be no appeal.

"Where is the use of staying here?" he thought bitterly. "It is all so long ago! There is a ten o'clock train. I will go by the ten o'clock train—nothing—nothing shall make me stay to endure these torments!"

He entered the house in that despondent mood. As he was going upstairs to his room he met her coming down from hers, dressed, and with her little hat on.

"You are going out for a walk?" he said, pausing, with his hand on the banisters.

"Only to sketch the little chapel," she answered.

"May I go with you?" he asked, with sparkling eyes.

Miss Bertram replied demurely that she should be very glad of his company. It was half-past nine, but the ten o'clock train need never have been on the time-tables that morning so far as Mr. Graham was concerned. Mrs. Fay's morning visitor stayed an hour and more, and for that hour Mr. Graham ought surely to have been blest in Miss Bertram's society; but the sting of her indifference still rankled in his heart. "I am only a link in the past for her," he thought—"no more. I will not speak of the past again till I am something in the present." But silence, complete silence, is very hard sometimes, and before ten minutes were over, Mr. Graham broke through his resolve in the manner and on the topic which he had least expected to lead to any self-betrayal.

"Mr. Graham," said Miss Bertram, addressing her companion, who sat at some distance from her, pretending to sketch too, but looking

at her all the time. He was by her side in a moment.

"Pray what portion of this chapel belongs to the sixteenth century?"

"Not a stone of it," he answered, unhesitatingly. "It is all pure thirteenth."

Miss Bertram looked surprised.

"Then I suppose I misunderstood Mr. Cowper," she said.

A sudden flash came to his dark eyes.

"Do you mean Miss Cowper's nephew?" he asked.

"I know no other Mr. Cowper. He was here three years ago, and we looked at the chapel together."

Edward Graham laughed with scornful amusement.

"Mr. Cowper has forgotten architecture in the law," he said, his old enmity rising within him.

"But Mr. Cowper is an architect," she persisted—"an architect in Saint Aubin."

True. How had he forgotten it all this time? Alas! how was he forgetting everything.

"And if Mr. Cowper be an architect now," he asked, in sudden mistrust, "why does Miss Cowper want me for her college?"

"Miss Mortlock objects to Mr. Cowper."

"And well she may," he could not help saying.

"You do not think he has talent?" suggested Miss Bertram.

"I do not think he has honesty," answered Mr. Graham.

He could not bear to hear her lips utter his name; he could not bear to think that he had stood by her side on that very spot; he could not bear to remember that, when he, Edward Graham, had refused little Lily Bertram's hand, her dying father had turned his thoughts towards Richard Cowper. Ancient animosities, quickened by a jealousy which he did not even attempt to govern or subdue, breathed in every word he now uttered.

"Do not wonder if I speak strongly, Miss Bertram," he resumed. "I have known Mr. Cowper years, and I know what I am saying. It sounds mean and base to take his good name from Miss Cowper's nephew, does it not? but he who was not honest at fifteen will scarcely be so at thirty-two."

Miss Bertram no longer made any pretence of sketching. Her book lay on her lap, her pencil was idle in her hand.

"You surprise me much," said she, colouring. "I hope, for Miss Cowper's sake, that you are mistaken."

"Mistaken!" he echoed—"mistaken!" he repeated. "Shall I tell you how and why I accuse him? I have never told living creature—not my own dear aunt, Mrs. Graham. Shall I tell you?" he added, sitting down by her side—he had been standing till then.

She looked at him like one perplexed, yet also fascinated by the earnestness and vehemence of his manner.

"Yes," she answered—"that is, if you like."

"We were lads together. We both studied under the same master, an able man, but not a just one. He did not like me, and I hated him, yet in the competition between his seven pupils I was sure of being first. It is not vanity in me to say so. We all knew it, and though Dick Cowper was his favourite, he could have no chance against me. Our master was a little deformed man, whose ill-temper was written in his face. I amused myself with drawing a caricature of him, and it was a very cruel one, for it was true—so true that I had grace enough to show it to none save Cowper. He advised

me to burn it, and I did so at once in his presence. How was it, then, that our master called me in one day, taxed me with this caricature, and summoned me to produce it. I could not, of course, but I did not deny. Thank God! I was even then man enough not to deny. I was expelled at once, and it was Dick Cowper's drawing which won the day."

That was all, and yet Mr. Graham had told the story of that unforgotten wrong of his youth as bitterly as if it had comprised within it the drama of a lifetime. Miss Bertram had heard him with a startled face.

"Oh! Mr. Graham, could he—could anyone have been such a traitor?" said she. "Only think—perhaps no one told the master; he may have seen your unfortunate caricature——"

"He never saw it!" interrupted Mr. Graham, "for he did not describe it accurately, like one who speaks of what his eyes have beheld, but confusedly, like one who speaks from hearsay. Moreover, when I showed it to Dick Cowper, he had burst out laughing, saying, 'The old monkey himself all over!' and when my master taunted me with my sin, he added—'There are young monkeys as well as old ones, Mr. Graham.'"

"And yet Mr. Cowper may have been innocent," gently pleaded Lily.

"He was not," again interrupted Edward Graham, for it was more than he could bear to hear her lips utter that detested name. "He was guilty, not through heedlessness, but through design. He wanted to prevail over me, and he succeeded. He got the reward of honour for which I had striven. He is clever, if you like, but idle. It is easier to betray a secret than to work ten hours a day," added Mr. Graham, with bitter contempt.

There was a pause; then he resumed:

"I never meant to tell this. I never told any one. *Cui bono?* I could not prove it. I felt that then. I feel it still; and if it were not to you, I would not have spoken now. But let me add a few words. Forgive me for being so personal. I cannot help it just now. The wrong that boy did me followed me for seven weary years. Until my master died I had in him a bitter enemy, who threw many a stone in my path, and made it harder than I can say. As to the wrong itself, I do Dick Cowper the justice to believe that he has forgotten it. He must have committed many a petty treason of

the kind. Besides, he is very good-natured. He can injure a man and not bear him malice. He makes untrue the Italian proverb—*Chi offende, non perdona.* But somehow or other his appearance since then has ever been the signal of misfortune to me. When I meet him I know that trouble is nigh. I have learned to dread his presence, to detest his name, to feel a sort of abhorrence, for which I cannot account. Am I wrong in judging his manhood by the baseness of his boyhood? Perhaps so; yet I think not. I do not believe in radical changes, unless as I believe in miracles—as exceptions. Saul may become Paul, and the Persecutor be turned into an Apostle—but the case is a rare one. The boy is father to the man. And now forgive me for all this. I feel how ill-timed it is, and in what bad taste; but when I hear of the man as being in the profession with me, something is wakened within me —not envy—he is not worthy of it—but a detestation of the mere thought that we two should ever meet again, or have anything in common."

Miss Bertram did not answer, but she looked at him with a sort of fear in her white face.

"Oh, Mr. Graham, can you believe in that presentiment?" she could not help saying.

"I do. I am sure that we are antipathetic natures—that we cannot help clashing when we meet, and that our two paths can never be too far apart."

She heard him with grave and sad wonder.

"Ah, what will you—what can you—think of me?" he exclaimed, pained by that look. "I have been mad to speak so. I have shocked, and perhaps grieved you."

"I am sorry for your past trouble," she answered, after a pause, "and also for Miss Cowper. She likes her nephew. I should like him to be good, for her sake."

"Good he cannot be; but he may be good enough to satisfy her. Surely, my dear Miss Bertram, you can have no illusions about Miss Cowper?"

Miss Bertram looked gravely in his face as she said—

"Miss Cowper has been very good to me, Mr. Graham."

Then, without giving him time to answer, she added—

"My effect is gone—I can work no longer;"

and, closing her book, she rose and walked away, leaving him there abashed, mortified, and miserable.

"I have offended her," he thought, bitterly; "and what for—what for?"

He went and picked up the little sketch-book, in which he had been stealthily drawing Miss Bertram whilst she was intent on the chapel, and entered the abbey very much crest-fallen.

CHAPTER IX.

WHENEVER Edward Graham lost heart with Miss Bertram, Mrs. Fay's two wings were his refuge. He generally made them undergo some severe treatment, some radical change, which served the double purpose of relieving his mind by work, and of giving him a pretence to prolong his stay at Saint Olave's. True to this rule, he entered the library a little before luncheon, bent on one of those improvements which so disturbed Mrs. Fay's equanimity; but, fortunately for the lady's peace, Mr. Graham could not fulfil his unkind intent.

Miss Bertram was in the library. She sat reading in one of the deep windows, where many a studious monk had read in the olden time. She leaned back in her chair—a low one; a book lay in her lap. Her eyes were fixed on

the page. She did not even raise them when the door opened, and he entered the low, long room. His heart throbbed with mingled joy and pain. She was so cold, ever so cold, and now she seemed displeased.

"Could she not give me even one look?" he thought, stung at her indifference. "What is Dick Cowper to her?"

He was sitting down silently in his usual place at the table, when she suddenly addressed him:

"Mr. Graham," said she.

In a moment his papers were pushed away, and he was by her side.

"You know the old part of Saint Aubin better than I do. Pray tell me something about this."

He looked over her shoulder. De Renneville's volume lay open on her lap at a highly-finished engraving of one of its most picturesque houses.

"Where is this?" she asked. "I have forgotten." And she looked up not unkindly in his face.

"It lies behind the brown house," he answered; then he could not help adding, "I did not know Mrs. Fay had De Renneville."

"It is not hers, it is mine," answered Miss Bertram. "Mr. Cowper gave it to me three years ago," she added, colouring faintly.

Mr. Graham bit his lip, and felt tempted to move away, but his good angel helped him to prevail over the jealous feeling, and to say, even calmly:

"Did you see much of Mr. Cowper three years ago, Miss Bertram?"

"I only saw him for a few days, when I came to his aunt's," she answered.

"Because," he continued, "I must apologize for all I said this morning. Mr. Cowper may be your friend, Miss Cowper certainly is——"

"Yes," she interrupted, "Miss Cowper has been very good to me, and I was sorry, Mr. Graham, to hear you speak slightingly of her. Think of all she has done for me," she continued, warmly. "She received me, she protected me against Mr. Lennard; when he refused to let me have a shilling of my own money, she supplied all my wants with a most generous and liberal hand. The money I can and shall repay, of course, but the kindness, Mr. Graham, can I ever repay the kindness?"

Mr. Graham's brow cleared. She did not

seem to care for what he had said about Richard Cowper, and concerning Miss Cowper he was willing to make any excuse.

"Pray forgive me," he entreated. "Yes, Miss Cowper has been very kind to you, I confess it, but would not my dear aunt have done as much, if Miss Cowper had not had a prior claim?"

Miss Bertram smiled, and looked very like little Lily.

"Dear Mrs. Graham," she said, leaning her cheek upon her hand, and looking dreamily before her, "how well I remember her!"

"And how glad she would be to see you," said he.

"Everybody has been so good to me," she continued. "What claim had I on Miss Cowper, or anyone?"

"You had every claim," he said, a little vehemently. "Miss Cowper only did what others would have been too glad to do."

"Mr. Graham," she asked, reproachfully, "why do you not like Miss Cowper?"

"Indeed, I appreciate Miss Cowper's good qualities," he answered, rather embarrassed between Truth and Miss Bertram. "She is kind, but is she wise?"

Miss Bertram looked distressed.

"I know what you mean," she said, in a low tone. "It makes me very unhappy to listen to the strange theories she has adopted; but she is very good to me, for all that."

"I wonder how you can bear it all," he said, a little drily. It was not in nature to hear Dick Cowper's aunt always praised for her goodness.

"Why should I not bear it?" she retorted. "It startled me very much at first, and then I remembered that He who is all-seeing and all-wise bears, and loves, and forgives as well. It would be strange if I could not bear it. Little Sister Martha, who lived with such cross old children, used to say to me, 'What are we here for but to bear?' And she was right. I am not old, but life has already taught me that lesson."

"A hard one," he could not help saying.

"Not so hard, if we will only remember one thing. 'We do not understand.' That was another of little Sister Martha's sayings: '*Ma petite*, we do not understand.' How often I think of it when I hear them all settling everything so positively. How can they tell, I won-

der. Everyone else was mistaken before they came, they say; then may they not be mistaken too? If they would only remember that perhaps they cannot understand. When Newton died, he felt like a child who had picked up a few shells on the sea-shore, but all these men and women call their shells diamonds of the finest water. And yet, take that strange delusion from them, and they are kind, good-natured, and, in some things, clever. Only," she added, smiling shrewdly up in Mr. Graham's face, "there is not a Newton amongst them, nor yet a Sister Martha."

"Of course not," said Mr. Graham, delighted to find that Professor Mortlock stood so low in Miss Bertram's estimation; "they have not the humility, without which there is no genius, nor yet the large heart, without which there is no charity. They are small."

"And very foolish, if I may say so," added Miss Bertram, doubtfully.

"Indeed you may," he cordially answered.

He felt light and happy. Never before had he and Miss Bertram conversed so confidentially as on this morning. It seemed to him as if, by laying bare before her eyes the great weakness

of his life, he had established a hold upon her; even as by speaking so openly to him, she had given him a right which, otherwise, he would not have dared to claim. Why not improve this golden opportunity? why not lead her again to that past in which they had been so friendly and so free?

"How well I remember the day when you took me in to see Sister Martha," he began, musingly, and as if that day had been one of the brightest in his life.

"Did I take you to see her?" asked Miss Bertram, opening her eyes in sincere wonder.

"Have you forgotten it?" he exclaimed, in a tone of plaintive reproach which only made her laugh.

"I really have."

"And I forget nothing—nothing of that time," he said, in a low voice.

She coloured very much.

"I beg your pardon," said she; "I know there is much to pain you in your remembrance of Saint Aubin, but if I live to be my own mistress——"

"Pray do not say a word of that," he exclaimed, uneasily; "it is all put by. I was a

struggling man, then; I am a successful one now."

"I know you are, Mr. Graham, but you suffered in your affections as well as in your prospects, and my poor house was the cause," she sadly added.

"Not at all. Miss Scot and I parted for other reasons, and I have no doubt that for both it was best." Then, seeing the look of wonder in her face, he audaciously added, "A man's first love is rarely that by which he must abide. He seldom fails to commit some fatal mistake. *She* may be perfect, but *she* is not the one in whose life-long companionship he can be really happy. I remember a pretty story which you told me long ago, Miss Bertram. You came one day—bright as a sunbeam, and broke in upon me, exclaiming, 'Oh! Mr. Graham, only think, Eve was Adam's second wife, after all!'" He looked rather triumphantly in her face as he said this, but his triumph was turned into discomfiture when Miss Bertram calmly answered,

"You have forgotten the best part of the story, Mr. Graham. Adam would not have his first wife because she was too noble and too good, and Eve, the second wife, only led him

into temptation and sin. So, at least, says the Jewish story, meaning, I suppose, to show the wisdom of a first, and the error of a second choice."

Mr. Graham bit his lip and tried to slip out of the difficulty by saying,

"I beg your pardon. I remember that Miss Scot was your friend."

"Yes; but that is over," interrupted Lily. She rose as she spoke. De Renneville fell from her lap on the floor at her feet. Mr. Graham stooped to pick it up, and Mrs. Fay, who had been hunting for the pair all over the garden, and in every arbour or shady spot near the house, entered the room and found them there. She looked at Lily's flushed face, at Mr. Graham's papers lying neglected on the table; his chair, still standing nigh Lily's, betrayed where he had been sitting; then she tried to smile, and say cheerfully,

"You dear man! You were at my wings, of course. And what are you going to do to them now?" she asked in dolorous anticipation of some bewildering change.

"I am going to renew them, Mrs. Fay," he answered, seriously; for if ever Mr. Graham

had been determined not to leave the abbey it was now. So whilst Lily quietly left the room, Mr. Graham explained to Mrs. Fay the wonderful improvement he was making.

"And yet the other thing was so pretty," said she, pitifully.

"Then have it, if you like it best."

But no, Mrs. Fay could not do that. On second thoughts, she fancied that Mr. Graham's last view of the two wings was so much better than its predecessor, only how long would it take him to elaborate it?

He seemed to reflect.

"I have gained much to-day," he was thinking. "In two or three days I might speak and not seem too presumptuous—but no, that is too soon. A week, it must be a week at least."

"Well!" said Mrs. Fay, imperatively.

"Well, by next Friday morning you shall have it all quite clear and ready."

"Mind you keep your word, Mr. Graham." And she raised her finger.

"She means it," he thought, gnawing his lip as he pretended to look at the papers on the table. "I have a few days, no more, and then

Miss Bertram will pass out of my life as if she and I were beings of different spheres.

Twilight reigned in Mrs. Fay's drawing-room—a soft twilight, still and dreamy; white mists floated over the vague landscape; the glow of a rising moon filled the sky above the low woods that enclosed the abbey. Mr. Graham stood in an open window, looking out. Miss Bertram sat on a low chair, far away, and at the other end of the room Mrs. Fay lay back in her chair, fast asleep. And hers was no mock slumber, but a real after-dinner sleep, soft and deep.

"A lovely evening," said Mr. Graham, coming back to Miss Bertram's chair.

"Beautiful!" she answered.

There was a pause.

"You have been to look at the sea from the stone window," he resumed. "I saw you from the grounds."

"I go there every day. I want to get a breath of air from Saint Aubin."

"Then you do mean to return?"

"Mean it! The very day I am free I hope to stand once more on Norman soil."

She spoke with a vehemence very unusual to her.

"Are you sure you will like it so well when you go back?"

He put the question gently, yet not without a certain reproachful impatience. He could not bear her to be always pining for a land and a people that were foreign to him. She laughed a low, amused laugh—the laugh of little Lily.

"Of course I shall," she answered, in a gay, light voice, which regard for Mrs. Fay's slumbers subdued. "Shall I not be glad to see the clear Norman sky, to feel the keen Norman air, to look at the dingy houses, so brown and so old, at the apple orchards, at the pasture fields, at the river shining like silver or gold through it all. Of course I shall be glad."

"And you will like living there all the days of your life?" he asked.

"Ay, verily, all the days of my life," she answered, with gentle mockery.

She seemed light, gay, and happy at the thought. He could not see her well, but he knew how she looked, and what light, both mirthful and dreamy, there was in her dark eyes.

"Yet you have not been unhappy in England," he could not help saying.

"Not unhappy, but lonely," was her quick reply.

"My dear Miss Bertram, what will you find in Saint Aubin now?"

"I shall find the dead," she answered, in a tone of sudden sorrow.

"Ah, but your lot is with the living," he could not help exclaiming. And then how was it that the great secret of his heart broke from him, not in many words, nor yet in eloquent ones, but still in words about which there could be no mistake and no error, for their burden was, "I love you." He had not meant to speak so soon. He had meant to wait and win her heart, then lay his at her feet, but passion had proved too strong for patience, and now it was done, and his fate was in her hands; and even in the twilight, and even though his heart and brain were so full of his own strong desire, he could see how pale and startled was her face. She was silent awhile, and during those few moments the room seemed as still as death.

"Why have you spoken?" she said at last, and her voice was both sad and low. "It was

so pleasant to talk over the past with you. And now it is all over!—all over!"

Her head sank upon her breast, and she clasped her hands wearily upon her lap.

Before he could answer, the time-piece struck eight with a clear, sonorous ring. A door far away opened, the footman came in with two lamps—one for each end of the room, then withdrew. Mrs. Fay had not awakened. Mr. Graham had gone to a table to look at a book. He now came back and stood once more by her chair. He looked very calm, but the hue of ashes had spread over his face.

"All over! Why so?" he asked quietly.

"Miss Cowper has my word that I will never pledge myself till I am free," she answered.

"Is that all?" said he, his eyes sparkling with sudden relief. "I will wait a year—seven years, like Jacob—half a lifetime, if need be—anything, everything, so I have you."

She looked at him with strange, sad wonder, then he saw the colour deepen on her cheek.

"No," she answered, "even that cannot be; for though you waited, I might still have to say 'no' at last. You must not think of me, Mr. Graham, till I am free, and then—then——

No, it must not be," she added, more firmly, and she looked steadily in his face; "it would not be right."

"You cannot mean it!" he said, his heavy brows darkening—"you cannot mean that I am not to think of you, because, if you do, I cannot obey you. Think of you I must; all I can do is to be silent, if speech offends you."

"Oh! Mr. Graham," she answered, looking at him with a sudden fear, and deprecatingly stretching out her hands, "do not be angry—I would not offend you—I only wish to do what is right—that is all."

He gazed down at her in perplexity. She looked at him very kindly. There was no severity in her eyes, in her voice, in the meaning of her expressive face; and yet, when kindling with sudden hope, he said, "Then I can wait, like Jacob," her face fell, and looking away, she uttered sadly and firmly the inexorable word, "No." He walked up and down the drawing-room in silent but terrible agitation. He forgot Mrs. Fay, and the inevitable sound of his steps on the carpeted floor. He only thought that he had heard his sentence—that sentence which he had once resolved, with

a man's pride, should not pass twice a woman's lips for him. Once, as he stood near the door, he stretched out his hand to go forth and leave her presence for ever; but if he was a proud man, he was also a stubborn one, and he could not give in without another desperate effort. He went back to her chair, and standing over it, he said,

"Do not punish me too severely for the one error—for the one fatal mistake of my life."

"What error?—what mistake?" asked she, wondering.

"Oh! if you know, will you—can you forgive me?" he exclaimed, sitting down by her side. "I should not tell you if I were wise. It is madness, and yet I must—yes, I must, even though you should scorn me, as you well may when you know what a miserable fool I have been."

Her dark eyes met his in grave and silent wonder.

"But what is it?—what do you mean?" she asked again.

"I mean that, when I last went to Saint Aubin, I was called by Mr. Bertram. He wanted to make atonement to me for the past; he

also wanted to save you from trouble and sorrow, and he asked me to marry you. Lily, Lily, forgive me! I put by from me the greatest good, and it is the torment of my life to remember it. Forget that, Miss Bertram—forget and forgive it. Only remember that the father you so loved would have given you to me, and that but for my wretched mistake you might actually have been my wife all these years."

She seemed to waken from a heavy dream.

"And so that was what my father meant!" she said at last. "He said something to me, and so that was what he meant!"

"Assuredly," answered Mr. Graham, with a beating heart. "You were very young—you loved him much. Am I wrong in thinking that you would have obeyed him?"

"Oh! no," she answered, without a moment's hesitation.

"Then you would have married me?"

"I should have obeyed him, Mr. Graham."

"Then do so now," he entreated—"I mean, remember that he would have trusted me with your happiness; then have in me the same faith which he had."

She hid her face in her hands, and he heard her weeping in the still room. "Père—père bien aimé," she said brokenly in French, and again her tears flowed. But when she spoke, it was to say,

"No, Mr. Graham. I would have obeyed him then, but I do not know what his will would be now."

"But you would have obeyed him then?" he persisted.

He felt a tormenting and irritating pleasure in thinking, as he looked at her, that, if he had married the pale, slender girl of seventeen, the beautiful and blooming young woman of twenty before him would have been his wife.

"It is useless to go over the past, Mr. Graham," she said, with some pride. "You did well not to have me then—not to bind yourself to a foolish girl for the sake of a little money; for in myself what was I worth? But I am right, too, in putting all that by. Forget that my dear father ever offered me to you, and only remember that, though we may still be friends, we must speak of this no more."

He remained silent for some moments, during which the ticking of the old clock behind him

sounded loud and clear. When he spoke, it was in a calm and altered tone—so altered, indeed, that, though he took her hand, she did not withdraw it, but looked at him wondering.

"I forgot myself," said he; "forgive me—forget it, even. Only remember that we were friends years ago, and for the sake of the past bear with me. Since I must not speak of what I feel, I will be silent—till you are your own mistress; but on the very day, the very moment you are twenty-one, I will ask you for that yea and nay which you must not, it seems, give to me now. Do not speak—do not tell me that I need not wait—that I can get my answer now. Be patient with me, and be kind. Let me hope till the day comes when I can hope no longer. I ask for no more."

She did not answer. Not one word passed her lips; and with that tacit consent he let her hand free, and as he did so, he could not help feeling a great throb of hope and joy at his heart.

There was a moment's silence, then Lily made some indifferent remark, which Mr. Graham answered in the same strain; then Mrs. Fay woke up with a little yawn and said—

"Dear me! have I been asleep all this time? And how have you amused yourselves? With architecture?"

Had Mrs. Fay been asleep, indeed? She woke so opportunely, when the play was over, that one cannot help thinking she had been in for the last act at least. But though Mr. Graham looked at her keenly, no twinkle in her eye betrayed an amused consciousness of what had passed. After all, the room was large, and she might have heard nothing. But then her hearing was keen, and she was too old a woman of the world not to know how to keep her counsel at times. If she had heard them she certainly acted her part to perfection.

"Never get old, my dear," she said, dolorously addressing Miss Bertram, who had risen and gone up to her side; "never get heavy and stupid and sleepy in the evening. Be young, my dear—be young."

And she patted kindly the little hand that lay in hers, and looked as innocent as a dove in a wood.

CHAPTER X.

THE afternoon was hot, but the grounds around Saint Olave's were shady, and such freshness as trees and water give they had. Mr. Graham, who had been working hard all day, went out towards five, when a little breeze rose, cooling the sultry air. He walked down a narrow path on the other side of the lake, and he was soon deep in a little glade, where a shallow brook flowed softly over pebbly stones, and ferns rose tall and green on its banks, and trees spread their dark green boughs so wide that scarce a glimpse of the blue sky could look in. It was a lovely spot, but Mr. Graham was not thinking of its beauty. He was thinking that, since he had spoken to Miss Bertram two days before this, he had not once had the chance of seeing her alone. She

had not to his knowledge entered the library; she had not, so far as he could see, gone out of the abbey, unless under the shadow of Mrs. Fay's jealous wing.

"She avoids me," he thought, with a bitter sigh; "that is all I have got by speaking." And raising his eyes, he saw her coming towards him, with her eyes cast down, and a bunch of ferns in her hand, and gleams of sunlight playing on her fair face. He stood still; she came nigher, looked up, and seeing him, blushed, and seemed troubled. He went up to her, and as he stood by her side he could not help exclaiming, "At last!"

When Miss Bertram exacted, and Mr. Graham promised, that there should be no speech of love between them, both were sincere, and meant to abide by the pledge; and yet by both it was now as thoroughly broken as though it had never been made; for he spoke, and she listened, and he pleaded, and she did not chide until, wakening as from a dream, she said, with startled face—

"But, Mr. Graham, you forget. I have not promised. I must be free till I am twenty-one."

"And when will you be twenty-one?" he asked, with an impatient sigh.

"On the seventeenth of next September."

"At least twelve weary weeks more!" said he, so gloomily that she could not help laughing, and gaily asked,

"Do you want me to get old?"

"I want to have you," he answered, with a suppressed passion that checked all her mirth.

"You may never have me, Mr. Graham," she said, with a pale, grave face.

He gave a start, but rallying quickly, he answered, with studied calmness:

"I cannot believe it. You are in all my thoughts, in all I do. I cannot take up a book but I find in it something that speaks of you. I was reading of Pompeii to-day. Have you ever been there? No. No more have I; and yet this whole day I have been haunted by two words which some learned man or other found on the walls of Pompeii, scribbled there eighteen hundred years ago. Two words old as the hills, fresh as the morning. May I tell them to you, or shall I wait till the seventeenth of next September?"

"If they were written eighteen hundred years

ago on the walls of Pompeii, why should I mind hearing them to-day?" she answered with careless pride.

"They are not much. Only two Latin words. *Suavis Amor.* Will not your Italian help you to that Latin? But as I read them, I thought for whom were they written? Was she dark or fair? Had she a pale or a blooming face? And—and, indeed, Miss Bertram, I could not help it, but it seemed to me that she for whom *Suavis Amor* was written must have had brown hair and dark eyes."

"I daresay she was like Lily Scot," said Miss Bertram, with a flash in those dark eyes which he was praising.

At first he felt as if she had struck him, and then his look kindled and his cheek flushed, for there is a meaning in jealousy which he who loves is quick to read.

"You do not think, you cannot believe that I ever felt for her anything like what I feel for you?" he exclaimed. "No, you must know better—you cannot believe it."

"You would have married her, Mr. Graham," she said very coldly. "The feeling has passed away, I grant it; then what you feel now may pass away too."

"Ah! you are very cruel," he could not help saying, and the look of pain in his face smote her to the heart. She looked at him very sadly.

"I do not wish to be unkind, Mr. Graham, I only wish you not to set your heart upon what may never be. I am only a girl like another, and surely—surely you should not forget all the trouble that has come to you through me."

Her looks were so gentle, her tones were so kind, that pain fled and hope revived as he heard her.

"Yes," said he smiling, "our two lives have been curiously mingled together. Even my dear old auntie saw it, and told me once that you were the thread of gold woven in the warp and woof of my life."

Miss Bertram coloured deeply and asked how Mrs. Graham could have said that. And then, unable to resist the temptation of ever reminding her of what might have been, he told her, even though it was against himself, how if he had heeded his aunt's counsel she, Lily Bertram, would have been his.

"Yes, I know, I know," she answered with a troubled face; "but Mrs. Graham was all

wrong. I was no thread of gold to you, Mr. Graham, only the cause of much sorrow; please Heaven that I may not be so still."

"How can you talk so?" he asked vehemently. "The past I have got over; and what is there in the future I cannot conquer? You must not pledge yourself for so many weary weeks' time, but when the day comes you will give me my answer. Why should it not be yes?"

She did not contradict, she did not deny. They had been walking as they spoke and had reached the cedar-tree. Its dark boughs spread over them, and the lake lay at their feet. The languid air went past, laden with the perfume of flowers from the garden. It was all so sweet, so fair. Here, too, a lover's hand might have written *Suavis Amor* on the walls of the ruin behind them, for future generations to read the words and wonder how was she who inspired them; a maiden dark or fair, with the beauty of the day in her bright face, or the tender sweetness of the night in her aspect. But all at once Lily seemed to waken from her dream, and looking at Mr. Graham, she said very firmly,

"Remember that I am free."

Free! the word smote his heart. He could not bear it. He looked at her with sudden anguish. Was it possible that she meant to escape him at last?—that on that fated seventeenth of September she should look wonderingly in his face and ask him what he meant? He cast the thought from him with a sort of angry despair. She had promised nothing, but oh! how gentle and how kind had been her looks! She had promised nothing, but how patiently she had listened, how mild had been her very chiding when she did chide! Surely, surely no rival would spring up during those weeks of suspense. If there was truth in the language of a woman's face Lily Bertram was his for ever and ever.

"I will never give her up," he thought, with a throb of passion at his heart—"never, never;" but aloud all he said was, for she stood as if waiting for his answer,

"Yes, Miss Bertram, you are free."

She bowed her head gravely, and they both walked in and met Mrs. Fay on the threshold of the abbey.

"Oh! you heroic people," she said, "to be out in this heat. How can you bear it? I

hope, however, my dear Miss Bertram, that you have given up your idea of going to high mass to-morrow. Your church is so far, and the sun is so hot, and I dare not ask John to go out on a Sunday. My coachman is very strict," she added, explanatorily, looking at Mr. Graham as she spoke.

The next day was Sunday. The last Sunday Edward Graham had passed in town; but this he was to spend at Saint Olave's. He looked at Miss Bertram. Should he venture on proposing to escort her to the little town of Saint Olave's, which was, indeed, rather far away? Something in her pale face forbade it; but though he was silent whilst she said with a smile that she did not fear the heat, his mind was at once made up. He would go before her, not to seem to be following her, and even she could not find fault if he walked by her side on the way back to the abbey.

"Ah! you will have your way, you will," said Mrs. Fay, and she shook her head over Lily's obstinacy, and watched her close till dinner was over, soon after which Miss Bertram went up to her room.

Mr. Graham did not see her the next morn-

ing. Indeed he almost avoided doing so. He went out quietly at half-past nine—high mass was at ten—and found Mrs. Fay in the flower-garden.

"Going out?" said she inquiringly.

Yes, Mr. Graham was going to Saint Olave's.

"To church?" suggested the lady.

Yes, Mr. Graham was going to church. But the expected taunt that he would bring home Miss Bertram did not pass Mrs. Fay's lips. She only looked at him with her twinkling eyes, murmured something about her wretched health and want of strength, then with a sigh of gentle envy went in; and whilst church bells rang sweetly through the silent land, Mrs. Fay, who was not so strict as her coachman, John, took up a novel and went to sleep over the first volume.

If the mistress of Saint Olave's thought that it was merely to walk home with Lily Bertram that Mr. Graham went out on that sunshiny Sabbath morn, she was mistaken. To a man in love there must be something of lost paradise in being in the house of God with the woman who is dear to him; but though, as he walked alone through the green country, Mr. Graham

certainly saw a beautiful girl in a pale pink muslin, light and clear, with a little straw hat and a bunch of rosebuds lying in the clusters of her rich brown hair as if they would like to sleep for ever in that lovely nest; though he saw her as if she stood before him, yet, even without the hope of her dear companionship for his return, he would have gone to Saint Olave's that morning.

Edward Graham had inherited not merely his Italian mother's creed, but also that simple faith which is the secret strength of the Italian race. It has faults, and great ones—what race has not; but its hold on the invisible world is strong and deep. Mr. Graham could no more have parted with this attribute of his mother's people than with the Italian cast of his features. The waters of unbelief might roll around him, they could not shake his steadfast Roman nature, strong as a rock, and in some things as hard.

In one of the quiet streets of Saint Olave's, with the shops all closed, and the brown brick houses looking asleep in the sunshine, Mr. Graham found a little Gothic church, white and new, and already nearly full. High mass

began soon after he came in, the organ pealed in triumphant harmony, and when the gospel had been read, a young Dominican monk, in a long white robe and cowl, went up into the pulpit and preached the sermon. It was brief, emphatic, and full of meaning; but to Edward Graham, who looked as well as listened, the young monk's sermon was especially in his whole bearing and aspect. He was pale and thin, and might have looked austere, but for the spiritual brightness of his face. In it you read the story of one who having given all up had received all in return. So could you imagine Saint Francis of Assisi to have been, the tender and loving soul who had renounced creatures, and yet to whom created things were inexpressibly dear, for the sake of their Maker. Edward Graham could not help envying him. Even in that storm of passion which had seized his being so suddenly, he felt that he was being borne down to dangerous depths. Miss Bertram was young and fair, and he would have staked his life on her worth, as a jeweller would stake his on the value of a diamond or a rare pearl; and yet a secret voice told him that the love he felt for her was a peril and a snare. "En-

lighten me, O God!" he asked, with fierce anguish, "shall I give her up—it is time yet—or shall I go on—on and be undone?"

Alas! no answer came, the sermon was over, a great stillness fell on the hushed congregation, a voice of love, praise, and prayer rose from earth to Heaven, then the priest gave the last blessing, and Edward Graham, standing in the porch, watched the congregation pouring out till the church was empty. Miss Bertram was not one of them. With bitter mortification and wounded pride he thought, "She came to an early mass in order to avoid me. And why should I seek her?" he asked of himself as he walked home alone, "why not abide by the test she has chosen, and wait; Time will prove the strength of my feelings and the truth or falsehood of what I read in her face yesterday? Why should I be such a slave? That monk is younger than I am by four or five good years. The passions which beset youth have knocked at his door and pleaded to get in; what convent cell, what human heart has escaped them since the world began? And yet he has withstood them all. The unlawful wishes of our fallen nature he has merely scorned. The desires

which all men may indulge in, of domestic love given and returned he has put by. Did he feel the terrible risk of binding himself to a creature however lovely and perfect, and did he, therefore, seek that supreme good, that eternal and ever new beauty, as Saint Augustine has called it, which never yet deceived? Surely, surely, without carrying renunciation so far, I can at least save my manhood and my pride; I can do for honour something of what he has done for Heaven; I can take Miss Bertram at her word, and, hard though it may be, obey her."

Such thoughts could not have come to a man whose strong love was returned, for the love we give and which is given back to us has a foretaste of that Heaven from which it has descended. But the love which is on one side only, which the beloved one denies back again, is full of sorrow, and sorrow the child of sin rarely loses its original taint. To love and not to be loved is keen pain, and pain breeds bitterness and secret wrath.

"Just in time for luncheon," gaily said Mrs. Fay from one of the ground-floor windows; "did you see Miss Bertram?"

"No," he quickly answered; "surely she has long come back. I trust she is not walking alone through those lanes," and he looked alarmed and startled at the thought.

"Oh! I daresay she went early," calmly replied Mrs. Fay.

"But have you seen her to-day?" he asked, still uneasy, with his foot on the threshold as if he were ready to start back in search of her.

Mrs. Fay stared.

"Why, don't you know that Miss Cowper came and fetched her last night?" she exclaimed, a little crossly. "It seems there has been a breakdown or an upsetting in the lectures, and they are all back again; and some little bird must have told Miss Cowper you were here, for she came and taxed me with it, as if *I* were to blame for having my own architect in my own house!" added Mrs. Fay, in an injured tone.

Mr. Graham did not answer. She was gone. He might not see her again. It was very easy to obey her now and offend her no more—very easy, and, alas! very bitter too.

CHAPTER XI.

THERE was a pleasant room at Cowper's Hill which Edward Graham had never entered. It was on the ground-floor at the back of the house, and it had been called the morning-room long before Miss Cowper's reign began. Cowper's Hill was an old house. It had belonged for many generations to the old Cowpers, with whom, however, our Miss Cowper could claim no kin, being of very mushroom growth. The old Cowpers, however, had passed away, their house and land had got into the market, and Miss Cowper had bought both. She never said distinctly that she was of the old race, but she allowed it to be believed, and she respected all the little heirlooms, old names and old habits of the old family, as scrupulously as if she had been one of them. The last owner of Cowper's Hill had been a

maiden lady, shy and silent, who sat in the morning-room every morning of her life working for the poor; and Miss Cowper made it a point to sit there too with her hands idly folded in her lap indeed, but with her tongue engaged upon almshouses, or colleges for the regeneration of woman.

She sat there now talking to Lily on the Monday morning that followed her return. There had been, as Mrs. Fay said, a breakdown in the lectures; but Miss Cowper, following Miss Mortlock's lead, called it a cabal, and held forth unweariedly, whilst Lily, bending over her frame, listened patiently, and the portrait of the last Miss Cowper looked down at her with a sad mild face. Gentle maiden lady, who did so silently what good you could, what did you think of your strange successor?

"My dear Lily," said Miss Cowper, taking out her fan and using it vigorously, "you do not know all you have lost by not coming with us. The Professor surpassed himself. His subject was the origin of man."

"And what is the origin of man, Miss Cowper?" asked Lily, demurely.

"Man," answered Miss Cowper, not in the

least disconcerted by so momentous a question —" man comes from star dust, of course."

The window was open, and a bee came humming in.

"And bees, Miss Cowper," mischievously asked Lily, " where do bees come from?"

" Don't be absurd. Bees!—well, and why should they not come from star dust too? It is all Evolution."

" Has the Professor seen Evolution?"

" How ridiculous you are! How could he? Don't you know that Evolution came from "—here Miss Cowper stopped short, then her face lighting up with triumph—" Protoplasm, that's it—and Protoplasm, as every person of scientific mind knows—Protoplasm accounts for everything."

" Excepting for itself," said Lily.

Miss Cowper fanned herself more vigorously than ever, looked at the ceiling, then at the last Miss Cowper's portrait.

" You have the most unscientific mind," she said with mild exasperation.

Miss Bertram looked up from her worsted work and answered gravely,

" I suppose Protoplasm is a wonderful thing;

but it does not lift the veil of Isis for me, Miss Cowper. The great mystery of all we see is a mystery still."

But with persons of Miss Cowper's turn of mind words go very far indeed. Give them Protoplasm or Evolution, and they are content.

"Is it possible you do not understand?" cried Miss Cowper, warming with her subject. "You have only to conceive self-existing matter in a state of endless Evolution."

"But I find that so much harder to understand than God and creation," answered obstinate Lily.

"You narrow-minded little creature!" said Miss Cowper, amused at her absurdity. "Just take a microscope, and it will tell you all about it."

"Are small things truer than large ones?" retorted Miss Bertram; "what I look at daily is incomprehensible; is that which the microscope shows me less mysterious? How do I, how does anyone, know what lies beyond the microscope——?"

"Nothing," triumphantly interrupted Miss Cowper—"there is nothing beyond what the microscope shows us."

"And a more perfect instrument will never show us more?" asked Lily, opening her eyes wide.

"Never," said Miss Cowper, in the same tone of triumphant certainty. We need scarcely say that Professor Mortlock was not answerable for such astounding statements. Indeed Miss Cowper's version of his favourite dogma often provoked him beyond the limits of patience; and he had been known to declare in a penitent moment, and perhaps with regard to Miss Cowper, that to talk of such matters to a fool was to be oneself a fool of the first water.

To be virtuous in life, to be pure in heart, to be meek and forgiving, to love God and one's neighbour, to have Hope and Charity, are things accessible to all men and women. One need not know much about Protoplasm or Evolution to pass through life blameless and loving; but the creed, if creed it can be called which rests on Science, turns into absurdity when uttered by the unscientific. And its High Priests know this well. Hence, perhaps, their thorough and natural contempt for ignorant humanity. They are like the gods of the lotus-eaters. They know how, only by the

labour of years, by the study of a lifetime; a few, a very few, can reach the empyrean heights on which they take their desolate rest; and looking down at the herd below, at the herd that labours and tills, that lives by the sweat of its brow and the toil of its hands, that has not and never can have time for research or leisure for intellectual life, they laugh at its fond illusions, at its foolish dreams of Christian perfection and of a life to come.

"And so bees come from star dust," said Lily, musingly, "poor little things!"

"My dear child," remonstrated Miss Cowper, "you do not suppose that bees were always the busy little creatures they are now, and that there were always beehives? I have already told you that bees are, like all things, the result of evolution. Bees began by being larvæ, of course. They made neither wax nor honey in those early days; but groped on through existence till they progressed into the bee state. Then they began to feel the want of making honey and——"

"Were there any flowers then?" asked Lily.

If Miss Cowper had answered truly she would have said, "I do not know;" but unwill-

ing to compromise the dignity of science by so candid an admission she steered clear of the difficulty by saying, "Perhaps there were, and perhaps there were not. At all events, when there were flowers bees went to them and made honey, and that was natural selection. Ages passed, however, before the larvæ found out that they ought to be bees, and before the bees found out that they ought to make honey; and during those ages the larvæ transmitted the result of their experience to other larvæ, and bees to other bees, until they all improved and progressed, and the bee which we now see was the result; and so it was with man," said Miss Cowper, in a tone which admitted of no reply.

Here the servant came in, and handed a card to Miss Cowper, who, handing it again to Lily, said,

"My sight is so bad this morning, just see who it is, dear."

Miss Bertram raised her bending head from the frame at which she was sitting, and said, with a heightened colour:

"It is Mr. Graham's card."

"Ah! he comes about the college, of course; and Miss Mortlock is out. How provoking! I

suppose I must go. I wish Mr. Graham would not make it a point of coming when Miss Mortlock is out of the way."

"Shall I go and hear what he has to say?" asked Miss Bertram, hesitatingly.

But Miss Cowper thanked her coldly, said that Mr. Graham would not stay long of course, and that she would go. She went, and Lily remained alone in the silent room, bending over her frame with a face as flushed as the roses that grew under her nimble fingers.

"So pleased to see you, Mr. Graham," said Miss Cowper, in tones of ice, as she entered the drawing-room and read the disappointment he felt on Edward Graham's face. "I thought you had left Saint Olave's. So glad you are there still. Something new about the college, I suppose."

And laying the tip of her fan on her lips, Miss Cowper looked hard at her visitor, as much as to say, "The college, if you please, and not Miss Bertram." But Mr. Graham, who had come prepared for something of the sort, was not taken by surprise, and before five minutes were over Miss Cowper lay prostrate under a heap of technicalities as mighty and as crushing

as the fatal bracelets and bucklers with which the victorious Sabines rewarded the treason of Tarpeia.

"Dear me, how interesting," said she, trying in vain to look wise; "but suppose you would kindly look in this evening, Mr. Graham, and talk with Miss Mortlock. We shall have a few friends from Saint Olave's, where, I am happy to say, science is beginning to find some votaries. The Professor, of course, will join us, and he is such a wonderful man that he will give you many valuable hints, I am sure," kindly added Miss Cowper.

Mr. Graham swallowed this pill and promised to look in towards nine or ten that evening. "At least I shall see her," thought he, going away. "That way he can only see her," thought Miss Cowper, going back to Miss Bertram, to whom she carelessly remarked:

"A business call, as I thought;" then rather querulously, "I hope the college will not be the death of me. Mr. Graham has so addled my poor head!"

Lily said nothing; but went on with her roses.

"I wonder why I ever thought of him when

my own nephew is an architect," resumed Miss Cowper."

"Mr. Graham wonders at it too."

"Then why should I not have my own nephew?" Miss Cowper asked, tartly. "I did get cross with Richard about that money three years ago; but the best way to make him pay it back would be to employ him, I fancy."

"Yes," dreamily said Lily, "it would."

There is nothing so provoking as when people whom you expect to differ from you agree to all you say. Miss Cowper, who had not the least intention of giving up Mr. Graham for her nephew, of whom to say the truth she thought very poorly, went off at once at a tangent.

"I hope you will be more civil to the Professor this evening than you were yesterday."

"I shall do my best," said Lily, with a smile so serene that Miss Cowper could not carry on the war.

Miss Cowper's drawing-room was already full when Mr. Graham entered it that evening. Saint Olave's is a very dull little town, and the mere prospect of hearing a live professor expound "some of those odious theories, you

know," had drawn almost as many people as if some spirit-rapping were expected. The people of St. Olave's were good Christians, and had been to church and chapel the day before; but excitement was rare amongst them, and such a temptation as that of listening to a second edition of the lectures which had been tabooed down at that narrow-minded Poppleton was not to be resisted.

"Another professor," whispered one lady to another, as the tall figure and grave dark face of Mr. Graham appeared; "*he* will be sure to say dreadful things, mark my words, he will. I wonder what his name is. Graham did you say?—I have heard of Professor Graham."

Meanwhile Miss Cowper and Miss Mortlock were receiving Mr. Graham graciously, and Miss Cowper took care to keep him under her wing as far away from Miss Bertram as was possible. And yet how soon his eyes had found her on the couch, where she sat between two gentlemen of mature age. How they lingered upon her, and left her reluctantly, soon to return again! How long would this restraint last? when would jealous and watchful eyes cease to observe him? Insufferably long was that

evening, and yet Mr. Graham was favoured with Professor Mortlock's views on architecture, for the man was a cyclopaedia of knowledge, and could talk of and dogmatize upon everything. Luckily the learned and eloquent Professor wearied of the theme just when Mr. Graham felt driven to despair. He changed his place, he moved across the room, Miss Cowper made a new guest welcome at the same time, and in a moment Mr. Graham was by Miss Bertram's side.

"Excuse me," she said quietly, before he could say a word, "Mrs. Mountford has been seized with sudden faintness. Miss Mortlock is with her; but I may be wanted—I must go."

They stood near the door of the morning-room. She opened it and went in, and left him there biting his lip and looking at that door which she had closed again.

"Most interesting," said a lady's voice near him; "Professor Mortlock is a most remarkable man."

The Professor, who knew what was expected of him, was holding forth. The people who had come to hear him were silent; and it was in a hushed room, standing with his back to

the fireplace, that the learned Professor began a second edition of that lecture which Poppleton had tabooed.

"The origin of man," said Professor Mortlock, "I refer to star dust, of course."

Miss Cowper, mindful of this morning's conversation with Miss Bertram, and oblivious of the fact that the Professor hated interruption, here thought fit to say,

"So I was telling Miss Bertram this morning, and bees, too, came from Protoplasm, I told her."

"If you like to call it Protoplasm," said the Professor, smiling and trying not to look annoyed, "do so, my dear madam. The main fact remains unaltered. Protoplasm is——"

"The same thing as Bioplasm," remarked Miss Cowper, nodding. "One is living matter and the other dead matter."

The Professor looked patient, which, as everyone knows, is the polite protest against impertinence, and said with great calmness,

"My dear madam, allow me. An exasperated theologian (pity such holy men should have such irritable tempers), has attempted to draw the futile distinction."

"Futile, indeed!" laughed Miss Cowper—"as if there were any difference between a dead and a living bee!"

It was one of Miss Cowper's trying ways to echo the Professor's sayings, and attempt to make them her own by repeating them, with a few trifling modifications, of course; and in consideration of the services she was expected to render to the cause, the Professor endured her vagaries with much patience; but even patience has its limits, and Miss Mortlock generally acted as moderator. When Miss Cowper went too far, she either stopped her short, or, acting like the drag of a coach going down-hill, she made her at least relax her speed. Unluckily, Miss Mortlock was still with Mrs. Mountford in the morning-room, and the fated dialogue went on, the Professor raising his voice to silence Miss Cowper, and Miss Cowper raising hers in the firm determination of using it freely in her own house.

"When the Potential Man was, as it were, feeling his way," said the Professor, looking big, and studiously averting his glasses from Miss Cowper's side.

"Like the Potential Bee," persisted Miss Cowper, resolved not to be beaten.

"And when he had got as far as the ape, and the ape became the man."

"Just as the larvæ became the bee."

"And he fought his way up through his lowest appetites to his highest development."

"And the bee—what a nuisance he must have been!—went buzzing about."

"Confound the bee!" cried the exasperated Professor, turning on Miss Cowper with an inflamed face, forgetting his manners and his philosophy, and proving, alas! that a man of science can be as irritable as a theologian.

A dead silence fell on the room. Bees, Protoplasm, the origin of man, star dust, were forgotten in this awful convulsion of Miss Cowper's social world. People stared at each other in dismay, trying not to look conscious that the Cowper and the Mortlock association was at an end. Alas! vain was the attempt to ignore the fact that the laws of evolution were now being fulfilled in a remarkable manner—that presumption, ignorance, and inordinate vanity had led to this inevitable catastrophe.

"Professor Mortlock," began Miss Cowper, in a voice full of wrath.

"Madam, I have the honour to wish you a good evening," said the Professor, with much stateliness; and when Miss Mortlock came in from the next room, her brother was gone, and it was all over—indeed, no one stayed after this. The guests escaped one by one, and Miss Mortlock remained alone.

"My dear Miss Cowper," said the latter lady, "what is it?—what has happened?—where is the Professor?"

"Never was I so insulted before!" cried Miss Cowper, whose wrath had not yet subsided, "and I beg to tell you, Miss Mortlock, that I will not stand it. Professor Mortlock has been taking advantage of my easy disposition, too long. I don't want to hear any more about the college. Why should I give all my money to a college?" cried Miss Cowper, in a rage. "I will not, Miss Mortlock—I will not! I will keep my money—no one shall get it out of me!"

Her fury was so great that Miss Mortlock could only look at her in dismay.

"But, my dear Miss Cowper," she at length

observed, in her most soothing tones, "what can Professor Mortlock have done?"

Miss Cowper laughed derisively.

"He said, 'Confound the bee!'" she cried. "I never was so insulted before. You may tell him so, for I shall never look in his face again. 'Confound the Bee!' And you may tell him that I am sick of Evolution, Protoplasm, and Bioplasm, and I believe they are all his own inventions," said Miss Cowper, staring hard at Miss Mortlock, who saw and understood with much consternation that the college was indeed, as she afterwards expressed it, "done for."

All this Miss Bertram had escaped. When Mrs. Mountford revived, and with many excuses for the trouble she had given, took her leave, Miss Mortlock returned to the drawing-room; but Miss Bertram, on the plea that her head ached, remained where she was, and leaned out of the window, that had been opened for the fainting lady. She had not been there long, when "Miss Bertram," uttered in a low, but emphatic voice behind her, made her turn round. She saw Mr. Graham, and looked at him with a startled face, on which some displeasure gradually settled.

"Pray excuse me," he said, "but I may not for a long time have the opportunity of addressing you again. I could not resist the temptation, when I saw you were here alone, of coming to say what may be good-bye till the seventeenth of September," he added.

She looked strangely distressed.

"Why will you not forget me?" she asked, a little vehemently.

"Never!" he said, setting his teeth, and looking at her almost angrily. "I will never forget you!"

"Well, then," she answered, with some pride, "remember, at least, the promise you made me, and are always breaking: either avoid me, or —or speak no more."

He was hurt to the quick.

"Very well," said he. "I shall shun your presence, since it is your wish that I should do so. Good evening, Miss Bertram."

He was turning to the door.

"Oh! Mr. Graham," she exclaimed, in a low voice, "are you angry with me, after all?"

He was very angry, but the moment she spoke he came back to her. He was angry still, but he loved her.

"I always liked you," she said, gently. "I like you still. You have suffered much, oh! so much, for my sake. I never can forget it; but I am pledged to remain free till I am twenty-one. You must not even wish to tempt me, Mr. Graham."

There was a dangerous tenderness in her eyes, a dangerous tenderness in her voice. His veins throbbed, he felt giddy with hope, joy, and fear, like one who hears the song of the Syren, and is drawn into the fatal vortex.

"Do you mean it all?" he asked.

"I mean nothing," she cried, with an alarmed look, "save that I do not wish to offend you, Mr. Graham."

He bit his lip as he looked at her. He had not dreamed it. She had meant something—meant more than not wishing to offend him—but he could not tax her with it.

"God forgive you if you are trifling with me," he could not help saying, and his pale lips quivered as he spoke. "Do not do it—do not! You would be my perdition! You might make me hate you, but I never could forget you—never! I should be haunted for ever with your face and your voice. Be true, Lily, be true!"

She looked at him as if she were wakening from a long, deep dream.

"What have I said or done," she asked, "that you should ask me to be true, Mr. Graham? Indeed you must attempt to see me no more."

"Till you are twenty-one," said he.

She shook her head.

"Even that I will not say," she answered. "You would take it as a pledge, and I will give none."

He chafed under the hard sentence; then, taking her hand, he looked in her face, and said, with a sigh,

"I must submit. I cannot help myself. I will do as you wish. I will attempt to see you no more. But on the seventeenth of September, as sure as my name is Edward Graham, I will ask you to be my wife; and then, Miss Bertram, you will not, I hope, refuse me that yea or nay which you deny me this evening."

She withdrew her hand from his, she turned her pale face away from his gaze. Was it a good or a bad sign that she looked so troubled and so sad, as if some doom she could not avoid were falling upon her.

"Good night, Miss Bertram," he said, gently. "May I write to you?"

"Good night, Mr. Graham," she answered. "Pray do not write." And thus they parted.

CHAPTER XII.

A BIRD of the air had conveyed to Mrs. Fay the tidings of the great Mortlock and Cowper difference long before Mr. Graham met her at luncheon the next day. To his surprise she knew every word that had passed, and dwelt with great gusto on Professor Mortlock's "Confound the bee!"

"And so the college is all up," she added, with evident complacency.

"I should not wonder if it were," replied Mr. Graham, very calmly.

Mrs. Fay looked hard at him. He took it very easily. Was he so sure of her two wings? When Mrs. Fay wanted a thing, she wanted it vehemently, passionately, without a second's delay. *Désir de fille est un feu qui dévore: Désir de femme est cent fois pis encore.* The wicked French proverb was abundantly fulfilled with

Mrs. Fay; but also when she wanted to get rid of a thing, she wanted to get rid of it thoroughly, and without having to wait even a day or an hour for deliverance. The thing in her way now happened to be Mr. Graham and the two wings. Miss Cowper was giving up the college, why should she not give up the wings too? She was sick of them; she could not imagine why or how she had ever thought of them. It was that sly little flirt, Miss Bertram, who had put it into her head, and all to bring Mr. Graham to Saint Olave's. And what did she, Mrs. Fay, want with Mr. Graham now? Miss Cowper had given up the college, and going on with the wings after that was like playing out a game when the stakes are gone.

"And what shall *we* do now, Mr. Graham?" she asked, musingly.

"Go on with our two wings, Mrs. Fay," he placidly answered.

"Oh! that will be delightful," said Mrs. Fay, looking enchanted. "There never was such impudence," she thought, as, luncheon being over, they went out together in the flower-garden, and there walked side by side, appearing the best friends in the world. "Wings,

indeed! I will have no wings. I want a conservatory and a sort of Winter garden, and I can have that for next Winter, too; and it will cost next to nothing in comparison with those odious wings that I am so sick of. Only how can I get rid of him if he will not go?"

But when was a woman of Mrs. Fay's age and experience at a loss for a decent pretence to turn out an inconvenient guest?

"And how is dear Mrs. Graham getting on?" she suddenly asked. "I saw you got a letter from her this morning."

But no, Mrs. Fay was mistaken. Mr. Graham had not heard from his aunt for some time.

"Is it possible?" cried Mrs. Fay, raising her eyebrows. "Dear me, Mr. Graham, I do not know what to say, how to act. I did see Mrs. Graham when I went to town some time back, and I feel it my duty to tell you, though she forbade me, that she had met with a serious accident—a sprain, a fracture. I am not sure which. I know she was sitting with her feet on a stool. She looked pale, dear old soul, but so nice with her beautiful white hair."

Edward Graham heard her and changed colour. His love for his aunt was deep and

strong, and, like all love, easily alarmed. He questioned Mrs. Fay eagerly, almost angrily. He felt wroth at the concealment which she had abetted. But Mrs. Fay would not know exactly what had befallen Mrs. Graham—she only knew that she could not stir from her chair, that she looked pale, and that at her time of life such things did matter, you know.

Mr. Graham heard her, said not a word, but looked at his watch.

"You faithless man, are you going to leave?" cried Mrs. Fay, in well-acted dismay.

"I must," was Mr. Graham's short answer.

"But you will come back?" This was said very dolorously.

Yes, Mr. Graham would come back; but he must run down and see his aunt.

"I know you will not come back," plaintively said Mrs. Fay. "Miss Cowper and Miss Bertram left for May Lodge this morning, and May Lodge is at Hammersmith, close to Mrs. Graham's; and you will be going there talking about the college, and you will leave me and my wings in the lurch."

Mrs. Fay had kept this Parthian shaft for the end, and she now watched its effect on Mr.

Graham. He changed colour. Miss Bertram was at that very moment living close to the spot to which he was going. He would not call on Miss Cowper; he would not attempt to see Miss Bertram; but assuredly she would call upon his aunt; he might meet her there, and even if he did not, he would feel her presence in the place; and his eyes softened as there came across him a vision of Mrs. Graham's pleasant countenance, and of a beaming face near hers in that old parlour which he knew so well, and had loved from his boyhood.

"Mind you come back!" said Mrs. Fay, as Mr. Graham took leave of her an hour later, and, looking very doleful, she saw him depart with infinite satisfaction.

"The only thing now is to keep him out of the house," thought the dear creature.

When Mr. Graham reached town, and drove off at once to Hammersmith, he found his aunt walking about with a stick; but bright and pleasant as ever.

"What nonsense have they been frightening you with, my poor boy?" said she; "why, I am almost well now! What a shame to bring you down from St. Olave's. You must go back again."

"No hurry, aunt," answered he, "I have ever so much work to do here; besides, I cannot trust you, you know. No news?" he added, looking round him as though he expected the silent walls to tell him something. But no, Mrs. Graham had no news. She was tempted to ask him about Lily, and to know if he really was smitten with her; but for once she resisted the impulse which so often led her to put imprudent questions or make as imprudent remarks. The poor boy was very busy now, and he was coming again this evening—it would do then. So Mr. Graham, who was in a great hurry, sure enough, having neglected everything for some time back, left her at once, and driving past May Lodge looked up at its open windows. The white net curtains were fluttering gently in the warm breeze of noon. A servant was settling flowers on the balcony of the first floor; but she whom his eyes sought was invisible. Alas! if he had only looked on the shady side of the way, he would have seen her walking slowly towards his aunt's house. Five minutes more in his aunt's parlour and he would have seen her face to face.

Mrs. Graham sat knitting in her parlour

window, between a bird-cage and a bright geranium, when the door opened, and a blooming face peeped in, and a pleasant voice said,

"May I come in, Mrs. Graham?"

"My goodness!" said Mrs. Graham, and she dropped her knitting,

"Well, and did you not know I would come?" asked Lily, smiling as she came forward. "You wrote to me and said, let me look at your face, and here I am, and you may look at my face as long as you like."

"And you are Lily!" said Mrs. Graham, admiringly. "My dear, what a beauty you have grown."

"Have I?" said Miss Bertram, and she blushed. She had not yet grown accustomed to the acknowledgment of her personal attractions.

"But how did you get in?" cried Mrs. Graham, suddenly remembering that Miss Bertram had entered unannounced.

"I found the door open and I came in. I remember the old parlour very well, Mrs. Graham; I sat on that chair, and—and I remember it all."

"I must give Jane warning," said Mrs.

Graham, with a sigh, "this is the second time this week."

"Try her a third time," coaxingly said Lily.

"But suppose you had been a housebreaker —besides, I like to keep a sort of rule over her," added Mrs. Graham, who was, in fact, a real disciplinarian. "Jane would like to have the upper hand of me, I know, and—but, dear me, I daresay it was that foolish boy who left it open—just like him, rushing off. By the way, my dear, is it true"—clasping her hands—"is it really true that my boy Ned is—they called it dangling, but I know better—is it really true that Ned Graham is making love to you?"

Miss Bertram turned almost pale on hearing so startling a question, and indeed did not attempt to answer it. Mrs. Graham hastened to observe:

"He has just been here; but don't fancy that he said a word of it to me. It was Mrs. Fay who told me."

"Mr. Graham has just been here," said Lily, looking around her; "I thought he was at Saint Olave's."

"He left it this morning; and now, my dear, do tell me all about it."

But Miss Bertram had no tale to tell. Yes, Mr. Graham liked her, she believed, but she could not think of anything of the kind till she was of age—and that was all.

"But that is nothing," said Mrs. Graham, looking chagrined. "You used to like him so much formerly, and perhaps you don't know what your father's wishes were."

"Mr. Graham has told me."

"But you don't care about him now, I see—I see."

Miss Bertram looked strangely perplexed.

"I always did like Mr. Graham," she said; "and I know how much he suffered about that turret; and, Mrs. Graham, on the very day when I am twenty-one I will atone—I will atone."

And her dark eyes flashed with a dewy light as she uttered the words.

"Yes, that turret cost him Lily Scot," simply said Mrs. Graham; "and I suspect that you have cost him Lily Scot again. I wanted him to meet her; but he was at Saint Olave's, and he wrote me the strangest letter, one would have thought there never had been such a person as Lily Scot."

"I am sorry," began Lily, whose face was in a flame, "Miss Scot——"

"My dear," interrupted the old lady, "Lily Scot never knew, and never will know, anything about it. But since he must not have her I do wish he had you. So be a good girl and have him."

Lily hung her head and answered in a low voice that Mrs. Graham was very kind, but that she must not like anyone till she was twenty-one. She had promised Miss Cowper.

"Dear me! why lose so much time?" naively said Mrs. Graham.

Lily could not help laughing.

"It is not time lost," she said, gaily.

"Well, I suppose it is like putting out one's gold at high interest," said Mrs. Graham; "the longer you leave it out, the more it brings in"

"Oh! I did not mean that, Mrs. Graham, oh! not that."

"Well, if you like him now there is no time lost," persisted Mr. Graham's aunt.

That arrow seemed to have gone home, for Miss Bertram was mute, but rallying she said,

"No, Mrs. Graham, that is not it; but I have

promised Miss Cowper not to like anyone till I am of age. And I never break my word," said Lily, with tears of earnestness in her eyes.

"You are a very odd child," remarked Mrs. Graham, looking puzzled; "you might promise not to marry, but that is quite another thing with not loving."

"Ah! it will not end well—it will not end well," said Miss Bertram, with a sort of wail in her voice, "and Mr. Graham will end by hating me. I know it—I know it."

"My goodness! why should he hate such a dear little thing as you are?" caressingly asked Mrs. Graham.

Lily tried to laugh, but she could not, tears stood in her eyes and her lips quivered.

"Had she and Edward Graham fallen out?" asked Mrs. Graham.

"Oh no," answered Lily; but Mr. Graham would hate her before it was all over.

"Tell me all about it, dear, and I will make it right."

Lily shook her head and tried to speak of other things, but Mrs. Graham was obstinate.

"Tell me, dear," she persisted.

"Well, then, Mrs. Graham, three years ago,

just before he died, dear papa told me he should like me to marry Mr. Cowper, and I said yes, but there was no time. When Mr. Cowper, however, asked me I said yes again; it was Miss Cowper who would not, and who made me promise never to get engaged whilst I was with her. Mr. Cowper was very vexed with his aunt, and also about some money, and he said I should be sure to like someone else before I was twenty-one, and I said I never would."

Mrs. Graham looked grave.

"I see you gave Mr. Cowper your word to wait for him."

"No, no," cried Lily, her face turning rosy red; "but I said that as true as my name was Lily I would like no one till I was of age, and I never will—I never will," she said, her voice sinking low and the flush dying from her face and leaving it white and pale.

"And you have not told this to Ned?"

"Why should I? I have not seen Mr. Cowper from that day to this. I made no promise to him; but perhaps—perhaps when I am twenty-one he will remember, and come and remind me of what my father wished, of what I wished for his sake; and whatever my an-

swer may be, no man has a right to know that Mr. Cowper may be accepted or refused by me. Besides, Mr. Graham hates Mr. Cowper so much, and Mr. Cowper does not hate him. I told him how I would pay Mr. Graham all his money back some day, and he called me a dear romantic little thing, but he said nothing against it."

Mrs. Graham rubbed her nose and looked very thoughtful.

"Tell me the truth," she said, at length, taking Lily's hand and looking in her face, "is Ned fond of you—very fond of you—desperately fond of you?"

"Yes," answered Lily, speaking low.

"Then marry him, dear, and do not think of that good-for-nothing Dick Cowper, who called you romantic for wanting to pay back my poor boy his own money, though he is not poor now, thank Heaven; and, my dear, you must pay him back so—with your hand in his—will you?"

Lily smiled at the bird in his cage, at the blooming flower in its vase, at the blue sky beyond the window.

"Perhaps I will, and perhaps I will not," she

said, at length; "but whatever I do I will not like Mr. Graham till I am twenty-one," she saucily added.

Mrs. Graham shook her head; but Lily only laughed. That shyness—that reticence which kept Mr. Graham at such a distance did not exist for his aunt.

"Dear Mrs. Graham," she coaxingly added, "you will do me a favour. We are here at May Lodge, close by—you will not tell Mr. Graham!"

"Then you are not going back to Cowper's Hill?"

No, they were not going back, and perhaps Mr. Graham thought they were there still, and would Mrs. Graham say nothing about it.

"Unless he asks me," frankly said Mrs. Graham; "I never can keep a secret."

This being agreed to, they dropped Mr. Graham and love and marriage, and all the topics which perplex youth, and drifted into other discourse which lasted till the day was well worn, and Lily, starting up like Cinderella, went away, and like Cinderella, too, left a token behind her.

Mr. Graham came in the evening; but for a few moments only. Mrs. Graham, keeping her lips tight, was virtuously silent on the subject of Lily's visit. He longed to question; but had no need to do so—a white handkerchief lay on the carpet near Mrs. Graham's chair, he picked it up, handed it to his aunt, who checked an exclamation. Mr. Graham, however, had seen the embroidered L. B. in the corner, and bit his lip. "She must have asked my aunt not to tell me," he thought; "let her—let her."

"Auntie," said he, rising, and walking restlessly about the parlour, "will you behave very well if I leave you for a while."

"My dear boy, where *are* you going?"

"To Sicily. Mr. Blake wants to build a villa there; I refused to go at first; but—I think I shall go now."

"And Mrs. Fay's two wings?"

"Oh! Mrs. Fay is in despair. Her cousin, Mr. Fay, has telegraphed for her; he is dying, it seems, and Mrs. Fay's wings must lie by. I am quite free. Yes, I have lost a good deal of time already; I shall go to Sicily."

"And when will you come back, Ned?"

"I shall be back by the seventeenth of September," said Mr. Graham, slowly; and angry though he was with Miss Bertram there flashed across him a vision of that seventeenth, and of Lily Bertram standing before him, fair, blushing, and twenty-one. "Let her dare not to give me my answer then," thought he, with flashing eyes,—"let her dare not to do it."

"And is it really a good thing for you to go to Sicily?" asked Mrs. Graham.

"Don't you know, auntie, that Mr. Blake is a fortune in himself? Mrs. Fay warned me not to trust her, and I foolishly did not take her at her word. So I have lost both time and money with the good lady, and must now go back to work in downright earnest."

He was still walking up and down the little parlour, and there was nothing of a love-sick man in Mr. Graham's grave Italian face, so earnest, so severe in its earnestness.

"Does he care so much about her?" thought Mrs. Graham, wondering. Ay, he did care about her—much—very much; but he was a rebel at heart, and with a rebel's pride and defiance he said to himself, as he walked home,

those lines of Byron's, which had haunted him ever since he had parted from Miss Bertram,

> "Unworthy manhood! unto thee
> Indifferent should the smile or frown
> Of beauty be."

CHAPTER XIII.

THE August sun was scorching the streets; but Mrs. Graham's parlour, with the window open and the venetian blinds down, felt cool and pleasant. Mrs. Graham sat by the window, looking at Miss Bertram, who sat opposite her reading a letter which her friend had just put into her hand. It was from Mr. Graham, and it had travelled all the way from Sicily to Hammersmith. It was a kind letter, a pleasant one also; but it said nothing of Mr. Graham's return.

"And this is August," said Mr. Graham's aunt, "and Ned had said that he would be sure to be back by—I forget what day—in September, and though he does not say so, I think he will. He must have important business, then, by the way he spoke."

The rich colour rose steadily to Miss Bertram's face, but her eyes remained bent on the letter lying open on her lap.

"Mr. Blake is very rich," she said, interrogatively.

"Ever so rich. It is a good thing for Ned, is that villa. And he likes Sicily; it is a splendid country, he says. I would have shown you all his letters if you had not been gadding in Scotland with Miss Cowper. They are beautiful letters. I have put them all away in my Indian cabinet, and my feet will not yet let me go up and down stairs without trouble. I have scarcely been out of the house all this time; but now that you are here again, dear, shall we not have a few drives together?"

Miss Bertram looked at her wistfully.

"Dear Mrs. Graham," she said, "we arrived this morning, and we leave to-morrow."

"To-morrow! And where are you going? Not back again to Scotland?"

"Oh, no, we are going to Cowper's Hill, and thence to France. Mr. Lennard is dead," added Lily, in a low tone; "I am not quite of age yet, but no one will torment me. We are going to Saint Aubin."

"And when will you come back?" asked Mrs. Graham, looking chagrined.

"I do not know; and I must go now," she said, rising as she spoke; "and, dear Mrs. Graham, when you write to Mr. Graham please do not mention this."

"My dear, he never says a word about you," innocently said Mrs. Graham; "he never knew about your being at May Lodge at all, you see."

Miss Bertram coloured, and was silent a while.

"I daresay Mr. Graham has forgotten me," she said, carelessly; "I have deserved it, and —it is best so," she added, a little sadly—"yes, it is best so."

"My dear Ned never forgets," gravely said Mrs. Graham, giving the hand she held an emphatic pressure.

"He forgot Lily Scot," was the quick reply, and before Mrs. Graham was ready with an answer, Miss Bertram said hurriedly, as she drew her hand away—"How late it is, and Miss Cowper is waiting for me! Good-bye, dear Mrs. Graham; do not forget little Lily."

A fond kiss, a quick embrace, a half-sad,

half-mirthful look of the soft brown eyes, and Miss Bertram was gone.

"Well, it is true," soliloquised Mrs. Graham, "he did forget Lily Scot; and who knows, perhaps he has forgotten this one too."

And she sat up in her chair and did not unfold the *Illustrated London News*, which a friend had just sent in, and she puckered her kind forehead into numberless wrinkles. She speculated about this love which is so much to the young and so little to the old. Mrs. Graham had been a good wife and a happy one, but she had never been in love with her husband, and Mr. Graham had not been in love with her. They had not known that bliss or that torment, but had walked through life hand-in-hand loving and beloved.

"I wish he were married to Lily," thought Mrs. Graham, uneasily, "and then there would be none of that nonsense of a hide-and-seek, and don't tell this and that, which only makes mischief. Why did she not tell him, and why said he never a word to me? Silly, silly things!"

"Oh, ma'am," said Jane, looking in, "such a surprise for you!"

"Ned, is that you?" cried Mrs. Graham, starting up.

"Yes, auntie," answered a voice from the hall.

"Jane, the door was open again—don't deny it."

"Of course the door was open," said Mr. Graham, walking in. "How else could I have entered?"

"My dear boy," cried Mrs. Graham, forgetting Jane, the door, and discipline in the joy of seeing him again, "how well you look, and how brown, and—oh! what a pity you were not here five minutes earlier, you would have seen her, and I am sure it would have been all right."

"Seen whom, aunt?" But he knew, how well he knew, whom she meant.

"Lily, to be sure. I was not to speak of her to you, but it's out, and now, Ned, do tell me, have you forgotten her?"

"Forgotten Miss Bertram! No, and why should I?"

"Ah! but she says you forgot Lily Scot."

His eyes lit with a triumphant joy which he subdued quickly. Was she, could she be jealous?

"My dear auntie," said he, sitting down, "you do not ask what brings me back so suddenly."

"No misfortune, I hope, Ned?"

"Indeed, yes, a great misfortune, auntie. Mr. Blake is dead. He went with his cousin, Mr. Henry Blake, on an excursion to the mountains, and there met with a fatal accident. He was killed on the spot."

The tears rushed to Mrs. Graham's blue eyes.

"Oh! Ned," she cried, "I am so sorry! You have lost a kind friend."

"One of the best I ever had, auntie. Mr. Blake was, in one sense, the making of me."

Mr. Graham spoke with a sad gravity which showed how much he felt the loss of his patron.

"I am so sorry," said Mrs. Graham, again. "Poor Mr. Blake; was his villa finished?"

"The villa will have the fate of the turret. It will never be finished," answered Mr. Graham, quietly; "Mr. Henry Blake's first act was to tell me as much. It will go to decay with its Moorish hall and courts, while its palm trees and orange groves grow taller and thicker around it, until they enclose it as the forest

enclosed the palace of the sleeping beauty."

"Ned, what a disappointment!"

"Yes, I had meant to make a little Alhambra of it—such was Mr. Blake's wish, and in that half Eastern land it could have been."

"But—but you will be paid all the same?" suggested Mrs. Graham.

"I suppose so—in time, auntie. Mr Henry Blake and Mr. Mordaunt Blake and Mr. Simpson Blake are going to law for the property—and I may have to wait. Auntie, don't look for your cheque-book, I have a very fair sum at my banker's; but I have lost a good deal of time this year, which is a pity, and now tell me all about yourself and Jane and your poor people —everything, auntie."

He leaned back in his chair, looking kindly at the dear old face before him, and Mrs. Graham became cheerful and communicative, and time slipped by till she had to leave him alone to hold a conference with cook.

Mr. Graham remained alone, if a man can be said to be alone when an all-absorbing thought is with him. It had been with him ever since they had parted. She had asked him not to write, he had more than obeyed her. He had not

even asked his aunt to give him tidings of the woman he loved; but the feeling thus checked from its natural outlet had become all the deeper in seclusion. The site of Mr. Blake's villa was a wild spot on the mountain side, overlooking the sea. No town of any importance was near. Books and newspapers only visited Mr. Blake and his architect at rare intervals. Everything save his present task and her image seemed to have dropped out of Mr. Graham's life. He had dwelt upon that one thought of her till it became almost more than he could bear. Did she care for him? had she forgotten him? what would her answer be on the seventeenth of September? Again and again he asked himself these questions whilst he saw her with the mind's eye in that Moorish home which he was raising for the wealthy Englishman. She had passed like sunshine through the light gallery and walked by his side in the luxuriant wildness of the Southern garden. When Mr. Blake died, and his task was over, his first thought was to come back and learn tidings of her. She was well, Mrs. Graham had said it, and the words of her greeting had filled him with a soft, vague hope in which there also lurked a

vague fear. Was she jealous? Jealousy is the child of love; who knew it better than Mr. Graham? Was she jealous of the dead past—so dead, so far away? But then what did she mean by forbidding his aunt to speak of her to him, and he knit his heavy brows as he brooded over the unwholesome thought that by calling up the memory of Lily Scot she might only want to exclude him more entirely from her life. He could not bear it; he chafed at the mere idea; he bade it begone. He rose and walked about the room. He looked at the bird in its cage, at the pictures on the walls; then he came and sat down again, and taking up the *Illustrated London News* he resolutely began to look over it. At first he looked idly, as we look at that of which we take no heed, then a wood-cut and the printed words beneath it seemed to leap forth in lines of flame as he saw the design of a Gothic monument, with a figure kneeling upon it, and read: "The Prize Design, by Mr. R. Cowper, Architect."

With a sort of incredulous stupor he gazed at it, yet he had no need to read the letter-press beneath to understand it all. Yes, whilst he was making love to Lily Bertram, whilst he

was leaving England to work abroad because her presence was a temptation he could not resist, whilst he was wasting time and life in a passion which might end in nothing, the enemy of his youth, the rival he had scorned, had leaped from mediocrity to genius, and secured the prize of money and honour which he had neglected to win. For, strange to say, he could not deny the rare merit of the design before him, disfigured though it was by the imperfect rendering of the woodcut. It was not merely that the kneeling figure was full of dignity and grace, that, of course, was not by Richard Cowper, it was that the monument itself was elegant and chaste. Much as he hated the man, he could not deny that there was genius in this tardy effort of his skill. He was still smarting with wounded pride and angry surprise when his aunt came back. Involuntarily, perhaps, he tossed the paper on one side.

"Well," said she, "what is there in that paper, Ned? Mrs. Foster sent it saying she knew it would interest me so much."

"Perhaps it will, auntie," he answered, with seeming carelessness. "By the way, is Miss

Bertram still with Miss Cowper, and is Miss Cowper still at May Lodge?"

"Yes, Miss Cowper was still at May Lodge, and May Lodge was hard by," answered Mrs. Graham, a little flurried at the sudden question. "Do you want to see Miss Cowper, Ned?" she added, hesitatingly, "because if you do—about that college, you know—they are going away to-morrow."

"Going! where to, auntie?"

"To Cowper's Hill, and thence to France. Mr. Lennard is dead, and they are going to Saint Aubin; but perhaps I was not to tell."

Mr. Graham looked very calm, but every pulse of his veins felt on fire. They were going to France, to Saint Aubin, and she had forbidden his aunt to tell him. Heavens! could there be such treachery in the heart of woman? He looked at his watch and said very quietly—

"Then, auntie, I think I will just run over to May Lodge and say a few words to Miss Cowper before I come back to dinner. Shall I?"

"Do, my dear boy; there is plenty of time. We dine at six, you know."

"I shall be here long before then," said Mr. Graham, cheerfully. And so he went.

May Lodge was soon reached.

Mr. Graham asked, not for Miss Cowper, but for Miss Bertram. The servant did not know if Miss Bertram was at home, but would see. In the meantime, Mr. Graham was shown into the dining-room on the ground-floor. It was still shrouded in brown holland. Yes, they had just come and they were going away; but on the table already lay the hateful number of the *Illustrated News* wide open, and the woodcut of the prize drawing stared him in the face. He stood looking down at it with gloomy severity when the door opened and Miss Bertram entered. All his secret wrath, all his jealousy, fled at her aspect. His heart beat with gladness, and he went to meet her with outstretched hand. She looked at him like one petrified. She had entered the room by chance, without a thought of seeing him, and there, instead of being far away in Sicily, he stood before her.

"Oh, Mr. Graham," said she, vainly trying to laugh, "you have frightened me; I thought you so far away. I came—I came for—" and she paused, and gave him a scared look.

"You came for the *Illustrated News*," said he, stung at her reception; "Miss Cowper does not

want me for her college now that her nephew has so distinguished himself."

"She is very pleased," said Lily, hesitatingly.

"And you, Miss Bertram, are you not pleased?" he asked.

She looked doubtfully in his face like one who knows not how to steer in order to be safe.

"Are you not pleased to see thus appreciated the bishop's tomb in the Abbey of Saint Aubin sur dun?" he asked again, and his finger pointed to the design with vengeful severity.

He had that very moment recognised the shameless plagiarism; but Miss Bertram had been aware of it before, for she answered sadly, but without surprise,

"Yes, it is very bad—I have not dared to tell her yet."

"And why should you not dare?" he asked, with his keenest look.

"And why do you question me about it?" she answered, drawing herself up with calm pride. In a moment he was humble and penitent.

"Do not be angry," he entreated, "do not; but do tell me this—are you really going away to-morrow?"

"Yes, Miss Cowper wishes to go to-morrow."

"So the moment I return to England you leave it, and I have not seen you all these weary months."

He took her hand. They stood near the table, she sadly looking away from him, he gazing down in her face, reading it with the eagerness of one who for so long a time had not seen it.

"Mr. Graham! How odd the servant should not have told me you were here."

So spake Miss Cowper, entering the room, and gazing at the pair with displeasure in her face. Her difference with the Mortlocks, which had never been healed, had made the mere thought of the college abhorrent to Miss Cowper. Mr. Graham, as having been connected with that unlucky college, shared in the aversion she now felt for the Professor and his sister. On seeing him her first thought was that nothing he could say should induce her to go on with the college, and her second thought was that the only course that she could follow was to avail herself of the excuse for wrath his manner towards Miss Bertram so readily afforded her. For Miss Cowper, though she was

dull enough in most things, could be wonderfully quick and keen when she wanted to protect her pocket. In vain Lily had started back in some confusion, and Mr. Graham had dropped her hand, Miss Cowper looked at them both severely, and said,

"I am surprised, Mr. Graham. I see you are here on business of a very personal nature. Perhaps I may as well tell you, as I was obliged to tell Professor Mortlock long ago, that, whilst Miss Bertram remains under my roof, I wish her to receive no attentions unless such as a gentleman may offer a lady in common courtesy."

The blood rushed up to Mr. Graham's brow.

"Well, Miss Cowper," he said, quietly enough, "if that speech means that my presence here is unwelcome to you, I can rid you of it soon enough. I can wait till Miss Bertram is of age to pay her those attentions which are so obnoxious to you now."

"When Miss Bertram is twenty-one," answered Miss Cowper, losing her temper, "she will, I suppose, be Mrs. Richard Cowper, and the question will concern her husband, not me, Mr. Graham."

"Oh, Miss Cowper!" cried Lily, looking with anguish at Mr. Graham.

He had turned not pale, but white. He gazed from one to the other with blazing eyes.

"You cannot mean it," he said. "You cannot mean that Miss Bertram——"

"I do," interrupted Miss Cowper; "I mean that Miss Bertram would have married my nephew three years ago if I had not opposed it. 'You must wait till you are twenty-one, Miss Bertram,' I said; 'on the very day you are of age, you and Mr. Cowper may pledge yourselves, if it pleases you. Of course he is much poorer than you are, and I will not have it said that I took advantage of your youth and inexperience to marry you to my nephew.' "

"Is that—can that be true?" said Mr. Graham, turning to Lily, who, leaning against the marble mantel-piece, stood listening to Miss Cowper with a pale, scared face.

"Yes," she answered, vaguely, "it is all true."

The blow nearly crushed him. The girl he so loved, whom he had thought all but his, who, if she had denied, had denied so kindly, had wished to become Richard Cowper's wife, and

would have been so but for Miss Cowper.

"It cannot be," he said, with sudden anguish. "What harm had I done to you that you should treat me so? It cannot be that you ever wished to marry that man, and did not at least tell me."

Tears flowed down her pale cheeks; she clasped her hands, and said,

"I meant no harm. I had always liked you —I did not know you would care for me in that fashion—I meant no harm, Mr. Graham. And, oh! how could I tell?"

"I am very much astonished at all this," said Miss Cowper, raising her voice, "and very much displeased. Mr. Richard Cowper is not to be talked of as 'that man.' He has won the great prize—he is a man of genius; any girl may be proud to be Mr. Richard Cowper's wife."

Lily looked imploringly at Mr. Graham; but he remembered how he had laid bare his proud heart before her, and remembering, too, that she might yet slip out of his grasp to become his triumphant rival's wife, the thought that these two would laugh together over his fond folly, stung him almost to madness. He went

up to her, and, in a low even tone, thrilling with suppressed passion, he asked—

"What tempted you? Only tell me that. What tempted you?"

"Mr. Graham, what do you mean?" asked Miss Cowper, raising her voice; "am I to understand that Miss Bertram has—has been—actually flirting with you?"

"Oh, no," he answered, bitterly, "Miss Bertram is incapable of such treachery; she only bade me wait, she only said——"

"Forget what I said, Mr. Graham," said Lily, whose eyes flashed—"forget it all, for I deny every word I said then. If you cannot esteem me enough to construe my language fairly, have at least the honour not to repeat it."

"You are right," he answered, gravely; "I beg your pardon, but say at least that when you spoke so you were not trifling with me—say that, if you can say no more."

The bitter anguish with which he spoke conquered the pride he had stung to the quick. It fell at the sound of his voice as waves fall back in their stormy bed when the strong winds cease and sink into a low wail. Unluckily, Miss Cowper

put in her say. She clasped her hands, rolled her head from side to side in amazement.

"Lily! Miss Bertram! I am shocked," she said; "how could you trifle with Mr. Graham, with any man so? I know that Richard has been cooler than he should be, but this was not the way to bring him back. Richard is not jealous; so bad to him, so unfair to Mr. Graham. Richard will be very angry if ever he knows."

"That will do," said Mr. Graham, whose face wore an ashy hue. "I want to know no more. Good-bye, Miss Cowper. As for you," said he, turning to Miss Bertram and looking at her with mingled wrath and tenderness, "this is my last look of your face. Never, never again will I willingly look at one who has done me so deep a wrong. Since you never meant to say yes, why were you not merciful—why did you not say no?"

"Well, I am sure, matters must have gone very far indeed for you to speak so, Mr. Graham. Miss Bertram, I am amazed."

So spake Miss Cowper. Lily did not answer. Her doom had fallen upon her as some huge rock may fall upon an unwary traveller, crushing him before he even knows that danger is

nigh. She had no time, no opportunity for explanation or excuse. The whirlwind of passion in which Mr. Graham had been enveloped so suddenly by Miss Cowper's assertions, had sealed her fate. Something she could have said, but the suddenness of his anger roused her pride, and the presence of Miss Cowper kept her mute. She heard his last words in silent anger, then turned her proud pale face away and let him go, and never said alas! how could she, "Yes, it is all or almost true, but after all I will never marry Richard Cowper, and I love you—I love you."

"That boy is very late," thought Mrs. Graham; "it is actually past six! He cannot have been at Miss Cowper's all this time."

At that very moment Jane came in with a note from Mr. Graham, excusing himself from joining his aunt. Mrs. Graham looked at the hurried scrawl in silent indignation. There never had been such a thing—never. She had a great mind never to look Ned Graham in the face again—that she had.

"Please, ma'am," said Jane, "cook says the fowl——"

"A cab—get me a cab directly," cried Mrs. Graham, rising in great agitation. A sudden thought had struck her. Something had happened, something dreadful, of which she was the cause.

When the cab, which went, alas! very slowly, stopped at length at the door of Mr. Graham's house, Mrs. Graham alighted limping, and pulled the bell with a shaking hand.

"Mr. Graham," she said, as the door opened and a man-servant stood before her; "I know he is not at home, but I am his aunt, Mrs. Graham; tell him I must see him."

"Mr. Graham is just gone, ma'am." the man answered.

"Gone! Where to?"

"To Saint Aubin, ma'am."

"My goodness!" cried Mrs. Graham, aloud, "he is gone to marry Lily Scot after all."

And she stared at the man with blank dismay.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE lamp shed its mild light on the central table in Mrs. Scot's parlour. Mrs. Scot lay asleep on the sofa; her three daughters sat at the table working. Jane was pale and thin. She had left Torquay out of health. The doctor there did not know what ailed her, and the doctor in Saint Aubin was not much wiser; but both agreed that Jane was delicate and required great care, and that her native air might perhaps restore her. Louisa was blooming as a rose. Indeed she was a very fine young woman now; but she, too, was at home. She had flirted at the school with a professor who was much too poor to marry her. The flirtation had been delightful whilst it lasted, but its end had not been so pleasant. The professor had left Saint Aubin very much in debt; but he had forgotten one of Louisa's letters in

his room. It had been found and read, and poor Louisa had been dismissed in disgrace. Louisa had never had very acute feelings of any kind. She bore the loss of lover and situation with great equanimity; but she was practical, and a very matter-of-fact trouble now clouded her smooth white brow and prompted her to address her elder sister.

"Lily dear," said she.

Lily raised her head, which was bent over a piece of fine embroidery, and looked up.

"What is it, Louisa?" she asked, gently, but with a wearied tone in her voice that matched the sad look of her eyes and the settled paleness of her face, a lovely face still, but no longer a fresh and a happy one.

"What shall we do for money?" said Louisa, with a marked emphasis on the word "shall."

Lily pressed her hand to her forehead and looked troubled.

"I do not know," she answered at last.

"What is it?" querulously asked Mrs. Scot's voice from the sofa.

"Did we waken you, mamma?" said Lily, unwilling to answer the question.

"Of course you did; I sleep so badly. It is

all because I dislike my food so. I wish Sarah would make me some chicken broth. It is the only thing suits me now. I am so unwell, though you won't believe it."

And though Mrs. Scot spoke in the old discontented and plaintive tone, she spoke truly now. She had been making believe at illness all her life, and illness, as if answering the call, had come at last. She was weak and languid, and she daily wasted away, and with the longing of all invalids for that which is hard of attainment, she pined for "home."

"I was so well when I was in England," she now added fretfully, "I cannot help saying, Jane, it must be fancy made you think English air disagreed with you."

"Every air disagrees with me," said poor Jane, despondently.

"Well, then, you would be no worse in England than here, and I should be so much better. Why don't we go to England, Lily?"

Poor Lily! it was hard to hear that and to know that England, the chicken broth, and all the little dainties her invalid mother longed for, were out of her power. Poverty had laid her iron

grasp upon their little home. Lily's teaching, and, alas! the delicate embroidery and needle-work in which she had always excelled, were now the main stay of her mother and sisters.

A knock came at the street door.

"Now, I wonder who that is?" said Louisa, raising her head to listen, "and Sarah is out, too."

"Don't open," cried Mrs. Scot. "It is that dreadful Mrs. Petherick. That woman will kill me. Ever since she and Captain Jekyll had that quarrel at Mrs. Morgan's, poor Mrs. Petherick has been unendurable. I beg, Lily, that you will not let her in."

"Dear mamma," gently said Lily, "it may be a message from one of my pupils changing the hour of a lesson, or——"

"Well, let them send again," petulantly said her mother; "why should you be the slave of your pupils. I wish you would not be so absurd, Lily. Pupils must obey their teachers, and not teachers their pupils."

Miss Scot neither answered nor argued, but she put down her work and left the room. She was not timid by nature, nor was there any cause for fear. Moreover, it was not late; and

though she knew the knock was not that of Mrs. Petherick, she had no false shame in admitting the visitor, whoever he or she might be. Still there was a sort of caution in her opening of the door; and though she held a lighted candle, which she had taken from the dining-room, she held it so that its light left her in obscurity and fell on the one seeking admittance.

"Lily—Miss Scot—do you not know me?" said a well-known voice.

"Mr. Graham!" exclaimed Lily, with a startled face; but she opened the door wide, and he came in and closed it behind him. And now they were face to face and saw each other again, and both for a few moments stood still.

"Will you not come in?" she asked at length.

"Yes," answered he; "in here," and he led her at once into the old well-remembered dining-room. She did not resist. She put down on the table the light she held, and waited flushed and silent.

"Lily," he said, in a moved voice, "why waste words? You know, and I need not tell you, what has brought me. We have now been parted six years. Since that sad time we have both been tossed by more than one weary

storm; let us seek rest in each other at last."

"Mr. Graham," she answered in a moved voice, "do you know what you are doing? I cannot leave my mother now, she is so weak and ill——"

"Well," he interrupted, "what of that?—either she can be with us, or she can stay here in every comfort. I am almost rich now, Lily."

"My sister Jane is delicate," persisted Miss Scot, "and a dependant upon me."

"Lily, what matter? I earn plenty of money—money enough for us all."

"And Louisa has been foolish," persisted Lily; "but she is my sister—I never will forsake her."

"Lily, is it possible you do not understand? I tell you I am very well off. Your mother can stay here with your sisters——"

"No," said Lily, looking him steadily in the face; "where I go my mother must go too."

"Well," he said, with an impatient sigh, "do you not understand that I will be as a son to your mother, as a brother to your sisters. They shall have a pleasant home near ours. Lily, Lily, do not be so distant! Remember

the past and do not thrust me so far away from you."

He spoke with some pathos as he looked at her. She turned her head away and did not answer; but silent tears flowed down her cheeks. Then she was in his arms, and his weary head rested on her shoulder and his eyes grew dim and his lips quivered. But if both wept it was not for joy that they had met again, it was for the memory of the sorrows that had come between them since their parting. Both buried their dead in that hour. She her lover beneath the sea, he his love betrayed and scorned. Both bade the past a last and sad adieu.

"And now I have found peace at last," thought he; and she—"He will be kind to mine and me; and since William is dead, what matter about myself?"

So it is in the storms of life. We rush into the nearest haven all worn and beaten, and it is only after a time, and when the angry waves overtake us even there, that we think with a sigh—was this rest after all?

"Do you remember that evening when you left Saint Aubin and taxed Lily Scot with

treason?" Mr. Graham had said one day to Miss Bertram at Saint Olave's.

She changed colour.

"Yes," she said, "I remember."

"Have you forgiven her?"

"I have," she answered, unhesitatingly.

"Would you have her for a friend again?"

"Never."

How was it that as his head rested on Lily's shoulder, and the little hand which he held was raised to his lips, Lily Bertram's flushed face, as she uttered that "never," flashed before him in all its lovely pride.

"Never." Ay, never should these two meet again now. It was over—all over for ever. Passion had had her brief fierce dream of mingled bliss and torment, and now came that repose which ought to be the only wish of a wise man's heart.

"Shall we not go in?" asked Lily's gentle voice.

He woke from his dream, and looked at her tenderly, and said, "Yes;" and so they went in together to the room where Mrs. Scot sat waiting impatient, but by no means ignorant of what was going on. Louisa, not seeing Lily

return, thought she would see what her elder sister was doing. She left the sitting-room and went out under the arch that led to the gate. It was dark and lonely; but a gleam of light stole out from under the dining-room door, and a murmur of voices coming from within reached her ear. Louisa crept slowly to the key-hole and looked and listened. She saw nothing; but she heard and recognised Mr. Graham's voice. The drift of his discourse, too, she gathered, and full of the news, fearful also of being detected eaves-dropping, she went back to her mother and sister.

"Oh! ma," she cried, breathlessly, "there's Mr. Graham come back and making love to Lily in the dining-room."

"Mr. Graham!" said Mrs. Scot, with a startled face; "are you sure it is Mr. Graham, Louisa? not Mr. Cowper? Did you see him?"

"No; but I heard his voice, and I am sure it was not Mr. Cowper's voice, ma. It was Mr. Graham's."

"And what does he come for?" asked Mrs. Scot, with plaintive exasperation. "We are badly off as it is. If he takes Lily away from us, what are we to do?"

Louisa stared.

"Why, ma," said she, "don't you know that Mr. Graham is quite rich now?"

"Rich," echoed Mrs. Scot, "that is one of Mrs. Petherick's stories."

"No, indeed, ma," persisted Louisa, "it is quite true. Mr. Morgan had it from Mrs. Randolph, who heard it when she was in England last year."

Mrs. Scot looked perplexed; then gratified; then amazed.

"And what is Mr. Graham doing with Lily all this time," she said, sharply. "I think he ought to know that I am the person to be spoken to first. Indeed, I wonder that Lily——"

But here Mrs. Scot's wonder came to an end, for the door opened, and Lily and Mr. Graham entered the room. Mrs. Scot rose and held out her hand, and looked dignified in vain. Mr. Graham's calm, strong will swept away the weak attempt. In a few words he had said his say and won his point. He had come to marry Lily, and to take Lily, Mrs. Scot, and her other two daughters, away to England. Mrs. Scot would have liked to hesitate, to raise difficulties,

to ask for time to consider; but Mr. Graham seemed so convinced of success, and, to say the truth, the temptation was so great, that Mrs. Scot looked helplessly at her daughter, and, sitting down again on the sofa, surrendered to her destiny, merely saying, "Well, Mr. Graham, I am glad to see you again—after all this time, too," she added, reflectively. And then with a weary sigh and a few words of excuse she sank back on the sofa. Mr. Graham looked at Lily, who smiled sadly. "Yes," she thought, "this will be a good thing for my poor mother. She will have her wish of going to England at last, and all those little comforts which I could never give her, she will have, too."

She sat down and mechanically took up her embroidery, as if whatever turn her destiny took her fingers must needs be busy still.

"Is that for yourself," asked Mr. Graham, drawing his chair near hers and bending a little over her.

"Oh! no," answered Lily.

"Then pray put it by," said he, guessing the truth, and gently taking the muslin from her unresisting hand.

She smiled, a little dreamily.

"We have both been tossed by more than one weary storm," he had said. What storm was it that had drifted him back to her side at last? His words were kind, his looks were kinder still; but surely she had not been in his thoughts all these years.

"I wonder if the Professor de la Mare will ever come back after that fashion?" thought Louisa, watching the pair with her restless black eyes. "How nice if he had a fortune, too."

But though the mere thought opened a wide vista to imagination, Louisa, who hated silence, soon put it by to draw Mr. Graham into conversation. How long had he been in Saint Aubin? Half an hour. Dear me, only think! Was he still at the Cité de Jérusalem? Did he not find the place altered? Old Monsieur Petit was dead, and his daughter, that plain girl with the red hair, was married. Had he not missed her? No, Mr. Graham had not missed the red-haired Mademoiselle Petit, which, considering that he had not been more than half an hour in Saint Aubin, was not surprising.

"Then you do not know Mr. Lennard is dead?" remarked Louisa.

"When did he die?" asked Mr. Graham.

"About a week ago. They have written to Mr. Cowper, in Paris; but some say he is not the heir, after all. Miss Bertram will be coming back, I suppose, now her guardian is dead. Did you see her in England, Mr. Graham?"

"My dear Louisa," said Lily, a little reprovingly, "you forget that Miss Bertram was in a convent in Somersetshire."

So Mr. Graham was spared the answering of that question. Louisa pouted and was silent. Jane, who felt hysterical, left the room, in order not to sob aloud. "Perhaps I had better go, too," thought Louisa, seeing that her mother had forsaken her sofa; but before going she could not help putting another question:

"Do you mean to make a long stay in Saint Aubin, Mr. Graham?"

"That," said he, looking at Lily, "I do not yet know."

A faint tinge of pink rose to Lily's pale cheek, but she looked straight before her, as if she had neither heard nor understood. Louisa smiled demurely, stood up, walked to a flower-stand, turned round and trifled with a photographic album which she took from the table, then stole

out of the room and closed the door very softly.

"Lily, you heard her!" said Mr. Graham.

"Yes," she said, looking at him with calm, sad pride, "I heard her."

"How long am I to stay in Saint Aubin?"

"We have been parted some years," said Lily, her lip quivering. "You must give me time to get back to the past."

"She is thinking of that boy," said Mr. Graham, to his own thoughts. "I suppose she cannot help it."

"I shall not be unreasonable," resumed Lily, with a sigh, "but why speak of that to-night?"

And she smiled very sweetly—so sweetly that she was his own Lily once more in a moment.

Mrs. Scot had left the room, "to see about it," as she said. Seeing about it meant a consultation with Sarah in the kitchen about supper.

"Mr. Graham has just come, Sarah," said Mrs. Scot, forgetting her illness in the dignity of the moment; "and of course he stays to supper. Do try and get something good. Mr. Graham is rich now, and he is accustomed to

delicate food; and I wish him not to feel too great a difference between his home and this."

"Is Mr. Graham married?" asked Sarah, on whom the orders for supper, when she knew there was no money in the house, and the news of Mr. Graham's return, fell like a double thunderbolt.

"Married!" said Mrs. Scot, with something like contempt—"what do you mean? Why, of course he has come to marry Miss Scot."

"He might have come sooner," said Sarah, drily; but remembering with a sigh that he might not have come at all, she resolved to kill the fatted calf in honour of the prodigal's return.

There was no money in the house—that is to say, Mrs. Scot had none; but Sarah had two or three Napoleons in her room, and she went to take a gold piece from the little hoard.

"Won't that serve out Mr. Cowper!" thought Sarah, vindictively, as she went upstairs. "He played fast and loose with my young mistress—I know he did. Well, he will see now that she can do without him—the mean, pitiful fellow. And Miss Bertram, little Miss Bertram, what has become of *her*, I wonder?"

"Sarah is very presuming," thought Mrs. Scot, as she left the kitchen, rather annoyed to find her great news received so coldly. "It is a mistake to keep servants too long. I always said so. And she never told me what she was going to get for supper; and I came all the way from the drawing-room to tell her that I really must have some chicken," internally added Mrs. Scot, fretting over that small grievance, after the fashion of invalids.

"Oh! ma," said Louisa, meeting her, "don't go in, please. Mr. Graham is asking Lily to fix the day. I asked him how long he was going to stay, and he said he did not know, and he looked at Lily, and Lily blushed, and I left the room, and I brought away the album, because poor Willie may be in it, you know, and it would be awkward for Mr. Graham to see him."

"But I am not going to stay out of the drawing-room," said Mrs. Scot, fretfully. "I cannot do without the sofa; besides, it is not the thing. Louisa, I wonder at you!"

"Well, I shall put the book away, at all events," said Louisa, running up to her room, whilst Mrs. Scot remorselessly intruded on the

lovers. They could not, indeed, have remained long alone. For as Sarah was leaving the house, Captain Jekyll, coming breathlessly up the street, pushed open the door which she was going to close, and said, in his boisterous tones,

"Never mind me, my good girl, I can let myself in. Mrs. Petherick there, of course! Not yet? Ah! well, she's coming."

"Missis is not very well this evening, sir, but——"

"She will not mind me, of course not," said the Captain, gently putting Sarah by, and shutting the door upon her as he spoke.

"Ha! ha!" said the Captain, breaking in upon Mrs. Scot's family like an amiable burglar. "Just like me, ain't it? No notice, but here I am. Mr. Graham, I declare! Well, sir, I am glad to see you, sir. Glad, but not surprised! I always said you would come back—always. And how are you, and how long have you been here? An hour. Charming!—charming!" cried the Captain, delighted to find that he was getting, as well as bringing, a choice bit of news, and killing, as it were, two birds with one stone. "I declare Saint Aubin will become an academy

of architects in time. Of course," turning to Mrs. Scot, with a fine assumption of carelessness, "you have heard all about it?"

Mrs. Scot, who felt more annoyed at the Captain's intrusion than inquisitive about his news, crossly replied that she could not imagine what the Captain meant.

"To be sure you can't. Well, here it is. That Mr. Cowper, whom we all pooh-poohed, and who made such a bad hand of Monsieur Duhamel's practice, has turned out a genius after all. What do you think of his winning the great prize of a hundred thousand francs—four thousand pounds, ma'am—for a tomb, or a chapel, or a statue? Four thousand pounds!—a made man, ma'am!—a made man! Mind you," added the Captain, laying his finger to his nose, "*I* always said there was something fine in that Dick Cowper—always."

Mrs. Scot and Lily heard the Captain in amazed silence.

"Four thousand pounds," thought Mrs. Scot. "Why, Mr. Cowper will be much better off than Mr. Graham."

And Lily, looking at Mr. Graham's rigid features and knit brow, wondered if he had striven for the prize, and failed.

"I suppose he is not so clever as Mr. Cowper, after all," she thought, with that lurking doubt of him which had always been in her heart.

"Dear me!" at length said Mrs. Scot, "how odd! I suppose Mr. Cowper will come in for Mr. Lennard's property too."

"Not unless the old boy left a will, which I doubt, Mrs. Scot, which I doubt, because——"

"Mr. Graham, you are not going!" cried Mrs. Scot, as Edward Graham rose. "Why, we are going to have supper; you must not go."

But Mr. Graham was going. Her entreaties, Lily's gentle looks, availed not. He was going. The hated name of Richard Cowper had acted as a baleful spell. He was too proud to expose the deceiver, but he detested him too much to listen to his praises. So he took his leave, rather cold and forbidding, and not much like a lover, unless when he took Lily's hand, and pressing it gently in his own strong palm, looked kindly in her blushing face.

The Captain had a great mind to go with him, but wisely remembering that Mrs. Petherick could not have the start of him at this late hour, he remained, much to Mrs. Scot's annoyance, to partake of that lady's supper.

"Drat that Captain!" thought poor vulgar Sarah, as she laid the smoking dishes, prepared by her skill, on the dining-room table. "Was it for him I went and changed my gold piece, I should like to know!"

But the Captain went at last, and Mrs. Scot, who felt very weary, retired to her own room.

"Oh! Lily," cried Louisa, eagerly, "you will tell us all about it now."

Even Jane, who had got over her hysterical feeling, looked inquisitive, but Lily, smiling, said,

"What have I to tell, you silly things? it is only an old story which was left off and is begun anew."

She smiled and looked happy enough, but when she was alone in her room the smile died away, and her eyes grew dim with tears. Louisa need not have carried off the photographic album, there was nothing there Mr. Graham should not have seen. The image his eyes were not to gaze on was safely locked in Lily's drawer. She took it out now and looked at it long and tenderly, then closing her eyes, she held it to the light of her candle, and let it burn away till the heat reached her fingers and compelled her

to drop it on the floor, where it smouldered until it was no more than a blackened scroll.

And Mr. Graham, going home to the Cité de Jérusalem, was thinking, "If I wished to be revenged upon her, surely I have my wish. The wife of that man—Heaven help her! Perhaps she will not marry him, after all. Let her, or let her not, I am a stone, so far as she is concerned."

CHAPTER XV.

A MAN'S life may flow idly for years, but let it only reach a rock, that, rising from the bed of the stream, seems to check its course, and it leaps over the obstacle at once, and rushes down swift and reckless as a mountain torrent. So was it now with Edward Graham. He had not cared much for marriage; he had loitered on the brink of that dangerous shore, but when he was baffled in the love he had set his heart on, marriage, and marriage with the girl of whom Miss Bertram had been jealous, was all he could or would think of. He had spared Miss Scot that first evening, but the very next day he became pressing and exacting, and before the end of the week, Mrs. Graham received a brief letter from her nephew, asking her to come and see him married to her goddaughter, and promising that this should be the last time she need cross the

Channel on their account. "We all leave Saint Aubin after luncheon," wrote Mr. Graham—"Mrs. Scot and her daughters for England, Lily and I for Italy."

"Do come, dear godmamma," added Lily, in her delicate handwriting, by way of postscript.

"Then it is settled," thought Mrs. Graham, with a sigh. "I ought to be glad that he is marrying Lily, after all, but Miss Bertram was a dear little thing too, only he could not marry them both, poor fellow, and I daresay it was Lily he liked best. Monday week, is it? Well, I suppose we must go to Saint Aubin this once more!"

And in Saint Aubin she arrived on a lovely morning, fresh and clear, and she found Mr. Graham looking very happy, and Lily as fresh and fair as ever, both waiting in the inn yard to welcome her. Mrs. Graham's face cleared wonderfully as she looked at them, for, as she said to herself, "she saw now it was all right."

"And so you are actually to be married next Monday," said Mrs. Graham, gazing at them very kindly.

"Yes, auntie, we actually are," said Mr. Graham, smiling; "did you doubt it?"

"Heaven forbid!" she exclaimed, with a fervour which made them both laugh.

They seemed light-hearted enough, as, indeed, why should they not be? Had they not suffered all these years, and was not the time when they could lay down their burden awhile come at last?

"I am so glad," said she again, forgetting, in the pleasure of the moment, a troublesome thought that had been with her all the way from Dieppe.

They walked out of the inn yard as a travelling-carriage rattled in.

Lily looked at it.

"I wonder who that is?" she said.

"I saw some ladies inside," answered Mr. Graham.

They were going up the middle of the street of the Haute-ville, where Mrs. Scot lived, when a sound of wheels and a jingling of bells made them look round and step aside. The travelling-carriage was coming up, and soon overtook them. As it passed by them one of the ladies within looked out, and seeing Mrs. Graham, she smiled and waved her hand, then her flushed bright face vanished, and the carriage went on,

and Mr. Graham looked after it with set features and compressed lips.

"Who was that?" asked Mrs. Graham, looking startled.

"I think it must be Miss Bertram," answered Lily. "I know she is expected."

"Ah," said Mrs. Graham, rather troubled, "I was almost sure I saw her on board the steamer. She stayed on the deck all the time, and there was such a bitter wind. What brings her back?"

"She will be of age in a few days," quietly remarked Lily.

Mr. Graham said nothing. Miss Bertram had come back for her birthday—for that seventeenth of September to which he had once looked forward with such eager hope. She had come back in time to hear his wedding-bells. What more could he ask for? If he wanted to show the fair traitress all his scorn, had he not his wish?

"Did you never meet Miss Bertram in England?" asked Lily, who was struck, perhaps, with the rigid expression of his features.

"Oh, yes," answered he, with a smile. "I saw her at Cowper's Hill."

And his smile was so quiet and cheerful that Miss Scot's momentary doubt vanished. Even Mrs. Graham, seeing him so calm, thought—"Young men have fancies, and this was one, I suppose."

And so they reached Mrs. Scot's door, happy and at peace.

"Strange, how little I felt on meeting her again!" thought Mr. Graham. "I would rather not have seen her; but still, how cold that glimpse of her face left me! I suppose there is a sense of wrong so keen that it destroys love in its very root and being. Dear Lily"—and his eyes rested kindly on her as they crossed Mrs. Scot's threshold together—"I shall never know the storm of passion and its wreck with you. It was gentle and tender love from the first, and thank Heaven that you, and none other, are to be mine at last!"

In this sense of sweet repose Mr. Graham spent the days that followed. Poor Lily was very busy, and rather worried; but he had nothing to do save to luxuriate in her society, and to brood, as it were, over the happy knowledge that she was his now, all his, and for ever. There was no alloy in his feelings, and though silent,

they were so plainly expressed that Mrs. Graham's satisfaction increased as the days slipped away one after another.

"Ned, I'm glad you are going to be settled at last," said Mrs. Graham to her nephew on the Saturday morning. They had been talking together of his approaching marriage, and this was the conclusion of Mrs. Graham on the subject.

"And so am I, auntie," he replied, smiling.

They were sitting on the terrace at the end of the garden enjoying the delicious freshness of the morning. A light mist floated over the rich landscape in the valley. Here and there a bit of deeper green told of cool shade, and bright, sparkling patches of yellow light showed where the warm sunshine lay on the stubble. The silvery river flowed far away through the fertile land. White houses and roofs and church spires glittered in the sun; a Summer sky, pale and pure, with faint white clouds floating slowly to the west, spread over all.

"Now, if it were possible," said Mrs. Graham, "how nice it would be for you to live here in this quaint old place, with the beautiful green country round!—would it not, Ned?"

"No, auntie, not now. Once I should have liked it well enough; but—not now."

He said the last words slowly, then rose, and went to the edge of the terrace, and stood there gazing on the fair prospect below.

"I wonder what I was about!" thought Mrs. Graham. "As if he could stay here and live next door to little Lily Bertram!"

Here the appearance of Jane, coming up with a pale and cross face, interrupted Mrs. Graham's soliloquy. Jane, whom the approaching wedding did not gladden, and whom the departure of the family for England exasperated, sat down opposite Mrs. Graham, and said, with a fretful sigh—

"I wish it would rain!"

"Rain, my dear!"—with a startled face.

"Yes, pour. I wish it would. I hate the fine weather."

"Oh, my dear! why so?"

"Because it does me no good, and I hate going to England; and I wish I were dead, I do!" Whereupon Jane began to cry.

"Nonsense," said Mrs. Graham, vigorously. "You want a change, and a change you shall have. You shall stay with me, and I will take

you about. Yes, I will, to—to concerts, and music bands, and the Crystal Palace, and Hampton Court, and all that," comprehensively added Mrs. Graham, still speaking vigorously.

There had been very little pleasure in Jane's life, so she did not receive Mrs. Graham's programme with the ungracious coldness of a town-bred girl accustomed to balls and parties. Her tears dried, her face cleared, a faint tinge of colour rose to her cheeks, and the dawn of a smile played around her white lips.

"Thank you, Mrs. Graham," said she, with a sparkle in her languid eyes—"that will be nice." Then, without hesitation or pause, "You know Lily Bertram is dying."

A thunderbolt falling at her feet would not have filled Mrs. Graham with more consternation than these words so abruptly spoken.

"Dying!" she said vaguely.

"Yes," answered Jane; "it seems she took cold in the crossing, and that, unless her complaint takes a turn by next Monday, she cannot live."

"She will be twenty-one on Monday," said Mr. Graham.

He had come back to his aunt's chair, and

stood behind it. Mrs. Graham looked up at him. He was very white, but very calm.

"Yes, and she was going to be married, too," continued Jane—"married to Mr. Cowper, you know. They say he is coming to take possession of his uncle's property, and that they were to be married at the end of the month."

The tears rushed to Mrs. Graham's eyes.

"My poor little Lily," said she, clasping her hands, "dying! I can't believe it. I'll go and see her—I must—I will!" said she, vehemently, rising as she spoke, and looking at Mr. Graham.

He was gazing straight before him with an absent look.

"She is so young," he said, in a low tone, and he walked away slowly down a side-path.

Mrs. Graham was not one to linger over a resolve. Without heeding Jane, she walked up towards the house, opened the street door, and as she was, with her garden hat on her, she went straight to the next house, and finding no servant, was half-way up the stairs, when she met Miss Cowper.

"Where is she?" said Mrs. Graham, impetuously. "I must see her, poor child—poor child! She can't be dying, you know."

"She is very ill," replied Miss Cowper, despondently. "I was going to beg that you would come, Mrs. Graham; she has been asking for you the whole morning."

"Well, and where is she?" said Mrs. Graham, looking impatiently at every door.

Miss Cowper silently opened one, and showed Mrs. Graham into a darkened room. A white bed gleamed in the twilight, and as Mrs. Graham drew near, a flushed face looked up at her from the pillow.

"She is so young," thought Mrs. Graham, echoing the words of Edward Graham.

"Oh! Mrs. Graham," said Lily, in a low, breathless voice, "it is so good of you to come. Please do tell Mr. Graham—I am twenty-one after to-morrow, you know—well, please do tell Mr. Graham that I have made my will—if I live to sign it, he shall have this house—he can live in it with Lily Scot," she added, with a little low laugh, very strange to hear. "And you may tell him, too—that I never—never meant to deceive him—I did not indeed."

"My dear—my dear," sobbed Mrs. Graham, putting out her hand, which Lily seized eagerly. A Sister who was standing by came forward,

parted them gently, took Mrs. Graham by the arm, and led her out of the room.

"Madame," said she, mildly, when they stood outside the door, "the doctor has forbidden this. She cannot see anyone—anyone," added the Sister, raising her forefinger.

Mrs. Graham submitted; she had been by many a sick-bed, and knew what was right; but Miss Cowper, who now joined them, said, in an affronted tone,

"She is very presuming—she will have it all her own way. Everyone," irritably added Miss Cowper, "wants to lead me, Professors and Sisters—they are all alike."

The Sister did not understand Miss Cowper's words, which were spoken in English, but her calm, shrewd look showed that their drift was not lost upon her.

"Good-bye, Madame," said she to Mrs. Graham. She was re-entering the room, when Mrs. Graham held her back.

"Do you think she will die?" she asked, in pitiful broken French.

"She is very young," said the Sister gently; "but," added she, in a less hopeful tone, "she is very ill," and with that she went in.

"Poor little Lily!" said Mrs. Graham brokenly—"poor little thing, skipping up and downstairs with her slip-shod feet," and crying as she spoke, she went downstairs, and left the house, forgetting the very existence of Miss Cowper, who looked after her from the landing, swelling with indignation at such treatment.

Mrs. Graham's heart was very full—too full for silence.

"Where is my nephew?—where is Mr. Graham?" she asked of Sarah, whom she met under the arched gateway of Mrs. Scot's house.

"Mr. Graham is gone for a walk, ma'am," answered the nurse, looking keenly at Mrs. Graham's disturbed face. "I heard him telling Miss Scot that his head ached, and that he would take a walk in the country."

"Ah!" said Mrs. Graham, with a stifled sigh.

"And how is Miss Lily, ma'am, if I may ask," resumed Sarah; "people do say she is so awful bad," added she in a plausible tone.

"Nonsense," sharply said Mrs. Graham, walking in; "I suppose she took cold on board the boat—that's all."

"Yes, ma'am, they say 'twas on board the steamer Miss Lily took cold, and that it has

fallen on her chest; and they say, too, Mr. Cowper, who came to marry her, is ready to shoot himself—they do."

"Then they know all about it," said Mrs. Graham, drily.

She went in and found Mrs. Scot alone with Louisa, and lecturing that blooming young lady, who listened with hands clasped resignedly on her lap and raised eyes that seemed to tell the ceiling, "Now just hear what nonsense ma is uttering."

Mrs. Scot, who liked to talk with her eyes shut, was not aware of her daughter's disrespectful attitude till Mrs. Graham entered the room; looking up to see who came in, she at once detected Louisa, and said very sharply,

"Louisa, you ought to be ashamed of yourself. Mrs. Graham, if you had a daughter, and if you were advising her for her good, and if she listened to you after that fashion, what would your feelings be?"

"I had a daughter once," very sadly answered Mrs. Graham.

This sobered Mrs. Scot, and silenced the angry exclamation that was rising to Louisa's lips. The mother looked ashamed of her

forgetfulness, and the daughter rather relieved at the turn the conversation was taking. She did not care about Mrs. Graham, but then there was no need that the good lady should hear too much about the professor, and discretion was not Mrs. Scot's forte.

"I have just been to see little Lily," said Mrs. Graham, with a deep sigh; "I fear the poor child is ill."

Mrs. Scot, still feeling awkward, said that she had heard as much. Louisa, triumphing in the defeat of her parent, said dogmatically—

"Lily has her father's complaint. She will not get over it."

"How can you tell?" asked her mother, crossly.

Louisa sharply replied that she was sure of it. Another contest was imminent. Mrs. Graham was in no mood to listen or to make peace, and she hastened to say,

"Sarah tells me that Ned has gone out walking; do you know what direction he has taken?"

"I never know anything," said Mrs. Scot, fretfully; "they tell me nothing, you know."

Whereupon Louisa unhesitatingly declared

that Mr. Graham had gone in the direction of Saint Aubin sur dun. Mrs. Scot asked how she could tell.

"I saw him," triumphantly said her daughter.

Whereupon Mrs. Scot shut her eyes in her turn and looked resigned.

"Then I shall go after him," Mrs. Graham hastened to say. And with something like relief, spite the cloud on her mind, she walked out of the room.

"I shall certainly advise Ned not to see too much of his wife's family," thought Mrs. Graham, as she left the house. "Oh! dear, oh! dear, what *are* young people now-a-days?"

She took a brisk walk, she never could walk slowly, and went as far as Saint Aubin sur dun, but saw no sign of Mr. Graham, for the excellent reason that he had never been there. She met him, however, on her return coming out from a shady lane which straggled by large market-gardens, close to the town.

"Oh! Ned," said she, going up to him in her sudden way and laying her hand on his arm—"Ned, I have seen her—and she is very ill."

"Aunt, I am sorry."

He spoke sadly and gravely, but he also spoke composedly.

"Oh, Ned, if she lives to sign her will she will bequeath her house to you, and she hopes that Lily and you will live in it."

"Let us hope rather that she and Mr. Cowper will live in that house," said Mr. Graham, with subdued bitterness.

"Oh! but that was all such a mistake," cried Mrs. Graham; "she meant no harm, Ned."

"She told me so too, and I did not believe it," said he, with flashing eyes, "and if I lived till doomsday, I should not believe it; besides, I have just met Mr. Cowper, looking much cut up, as he well may be. And now, auntie, do me a favour. Let us talk no more of Miss Bertram. Let us both hope that she will recover, and live, and be happy, but her doom is to be decided by next Monday, and next Monday is to be my wedding-day. I wish her well, God knows I do! I even forgive her the great wrong she did me, but I wish to forget her—let her be to me as one who never existed, as I shall be to her."

"Ned, you are hard!" Mrs. Graham could not help saying.

"I have suffered," he answered, looking vaguely before him, "and suffering does not always make us meek."

They said no more, but when they passed by the house of the Field of the Cloth of Gold, where Lily Bertram lay between life and death, Mrs. Graham looked pitifully towards one window, and her nephew knit his brow and compressed his lips, and looked straight before him.

The whole of that afternoon, which Mr. Graham spent as usual in Lily's society, his aunt watched him. He was as cheerful and as attentive as ever to his affianced wife; his brow was calm, his look was clear, but now and then it became very absent, the look of one who gazes at something very far away.

CHAPTER XVI.

"YOU know Miss Bertram is given up," said Mrs. Petherick.

Mrs. Scot, who was addressed, and whom the mere thought of sickness and death depressed, replied very crossly that Captain Jekyll had just told her Miss Bertram was a little better.

"Of course he did," said Mrs. Petherick, "but I thought, Mrs. Scot, you knew what Captain Jekyll's news were worth."

"I find it very hard that everyone should be ill or dying," resumed Mrs. Scot, in a lamentable tone, "and I think it really unkind that everyone should come with such news to me in my present state of health."

"Well, but, my dear Mrs. Scot, I don't invent the news," argued Mrs. Petherick, who thought this remark personal.

Mrs. Scot, who looked by no means sure that

Mrs. Petherick did not invent her news, sighed profoundly, and abstained from giving any answer. Jane and Louisa exchanged a few whispered remarks, then were silent. Lily sat leaning back in her chair by the window, where she was sewing in the light of the setting sun that streamed with long slanting rays of gold into the room. She let her needle flag, and leaning her cheek upon her hand, looked gently sad.

"Poor Lily," she said, "I hope she will recover," and she sighed, and Mr. Graham, who sat opposite her, looked at her and read every line of her face as if he had never gazed on it before. What a fair white brow spread beneath the soft dark hair! How clear and fine were those delicate eyebrows! The dreamy eyes were both gentle and tender. Every line of that charming countenance spoke of repose and peace. Could passion, or ungentle emotion, or sorrow even, ever disturb the graceful harmony of those serene features? How was this? In what region beyond grief, or strife, or unquiet thoughts did this fair Lily move that they never reached her? And he sighed a little weariedly, whilst the argument about the other

Lily's life and death went on near him, and Mrs. Graham, who sat out of the sunlight in the shadowy part of the room, looked at him with tears in her blue eyes.

"And I am sure Mrs. Morgan, who had just met Miss Cowper, who was crying, could not be mistaken," insisted Mrs. Petherick, getting affronted at Mrs. Scot's obstinate belief in Captain Jekyll's declaration that Miss Bertram was a little better.

"If Miss Bertram had not been better, Miss Cowper would not have been out," said Mrs. Scot, rather triumphantly.

"Oh! she has to see to Mr. Cowper, of course," promptly answered Mrs. Petherick. "Everyone knows that Mr. Cowper is in debt up to his very ears; that he wanted to marry Miss Bertram, and that there is some terrible to do about his great prize. I never quite believed in it, for my part, and of course Mr. Lennard's death and no will must have been a sore blow to him."

And so the conversation drifted away from Miss Bertram and her illness, until it flagged and almost ceased, and the room became oppressively still. What is there in the air, even

though the sky be clear, that often tells us when a storm is coming on? What subtle signs are they which sight and hearing at once detect? A little cloud drifting by, a low wind rising, then falling down again, a sudden stillness, a lightning flash, a thunder-clap, and it is done, the storm has come and marred in a moment the fair face of Nature. As it is with the world we live in, so is it with that world of human beings and their passions and emotions which seems so smooth and is so pregnant with all the elements of wrath and storm. Mrs. Petherick, annoyed at the dulness which had fallen upon them all, made another vigorous attempt at conversation.

"I always knew Mr. Cowper would not turn out well," she said, nodding shrewdly. "There was something what d'ye call him about the man."

"I really don't understand," irritably replied Mrs. Scot. "What can you mean, Mrs. Petherick?"

Mrs. Petherick did not attempt to answer. No one indeed tried to speak. Everyone looked at the door, outside of which strange sounds were heard, as of one seeking admittance, which was vehemently denied.

"Oh! sir, don't!—oh! pray don't!—indeed, sir, you can't!" the voice of Sarah was saying, in low, though disturbed accents. "Indeed—indeed, sir—" She said no more. The door opened, a tall, manly figure entered the room, and with his entrance the storm broke upon them all.

William Lennard looked neither right nor left. He went straight to where Lily sat, and standing before her in the red light of the setting sun, he said in a low, broken voice,

"Lily, you know me! I am not dead, but living, Lily!"

Mrs. Scot screamed, but who heeded her then? William held out his two hands to Lily Scot. She rose slowly, her face was ashy, her lips were white.

"William! William!" she said; and her hands were clasped in his.

"My darling!" he exclaimed, with a sob.

But if he did not know, she quickly remembered that a great wide gap stretched between them now. The white work she was stitching—it was part of her wedding *trousseau*—had slipped on the floor at the feet of Mr. Graham, who was gazing at them both with strange

calmness. In vain, with a useless instinct of concealment, Jane and Louisa went up to their recovered cousin, and standing between him and Mr. Graham said, "Oh! William! William!" and began to cry. In vain the young man's jealous eye had flashed as he saw his rival, and Lily's fair cheek had grown deadly pale. Mr. Graham remained impassive. It seemed to him later that he had always known this was coming, that he had always felt that William Lennard had not been really drowned, but would rise from the depth of the sea waves some day, and claim back, if not Lily, who was pledged to him, at least Lily's love, which she could not alienate from her sailor cousin; so whilst Jane and Louisa uttered exclamations, whilst their mother went into hysterics, and Mrs. Petherick's voice was heard, he looked at these two as they stood before him in the red sunlight, with a sort of apathy. It was not Lily's love he wanted, but the rest which Lily could give him. So when at last she turned a startled, frightened look upon him, he only smiled, and rising, held out his hand to the young man.

"Mr. Lennard," said he, "I wish you joy of your safe return. You know, or may guess,

what everyone believed your fate to be. You come back to find many changes, but I for one am heartily glad to see you safe and sound once more."

Lily, as she heard him, looked piteously at William. And yet she seemed relieved at Mr. Graham's composure. She yielded to her fate with the submission which had been her lot through life, and so stood between the present and the past, silent and pale, but also resigned.

"William," she said, a little faintly, "you have not spoken to my mother yet."

But William took no notice of poor Mrs. Scot, who was sobbing on the sofa. He took no notice even of Mr. Graham's outstretched hand —he only gave him one look of utter abhorrence, then turned his burning eyes upon Lily.

"What were your last words when we parted?" he asked, in a low, distinct voice.

Lily tried to answer, but her lips moved and uttered no sound. Mrs. Scot, however, had heard the question, and clasping her hands, said distractedly,

"William, William, have you come back only to make mischief, and be the undoing of us all?"

"What were your last words when we parted?" asked William, again.

"God knows how I grieved for you," answered Lily, at last—"God knows how I bless Him for having restored you, William."

"Do you?" said William, savagely. "I have not seen my uncle yet. I come to you, and this is my welcome. Thank you, Miss Scot—thank you."

"Your uncle is dead," said Mrs. Scot, with a moan; "and it is just like you, William, to rush in and not know it. Mr. Cowper has come to claim the property, I believe; but I should say you are the rightful heir."

"My uncle is dead!" exclaimed William, turning very white. "What next?"

No one answered; only Mrs. Petherick remarked—

"I feel sure Mr. Lennard made no will. I heard him saying as much again and again. 'Let them fight it out,' said he."

William did not heed her. His lot had been a hard one; he had been wrecked, and he had fought for his life with the furious waves, that swallowed others by his side. He had wandered through deserts where

savage beasts, and men more savage than they, were ready to spring upon and destroy him. He had escaped it all, and made his way home, through fatigue and toil that would have killed one less strong, and this was his welcome! The girl he loved was going to marry another man, and his uncle's home was closed upon him by the pitiless hand of death! Perhaps it was not wonderful that the look which he now cast round the room was somewhat stern.

"I am not wanted here," said he, bitterly. "Good-bye, Mrs. Scot. Good-bye, Miss Scot;" and giving Mr. Graham a last look of hate, he walked out, and did not take the trouble to close the door after him.

"Do shut that door, Louisa!" plaintively said Mrs. Scot, who had a horror of draughts.

Lily looked at her future husband, and said firmly—

"Forgive him, Mr. Graham; he will know better later. Now he is excited and unjust," she added, her white lips quivering.

"I call it dreadful to come and startle people so," said Mrs. Scot, a little indignantly. "If William had had a particle of consideration for Lily and me, he would have prepared us for

his return. He always was a dreadful boy."

Mr. Graham looked at Lily, and said quietly—

"Poor fellow! Yes, Lily, you are right. He will know better later."

She sank down on her chair with a weary sigh, then took up her work, and went on with it, as we must go on with life, sad or gay though it may be. Mr. Graham did not stay late that evening. Mrs. Petherick talked, and Louisa's tongue went freely; but there was an awkwardness in the discourse that made it worse than silence.

"This has tried you," he kindly said to Lily, in a tone which could not reach even Mrs. Petherick's attentive ear. "You will be more yourself to-morrow."

With a grateful look, Lily gave him her hand.

"You know you can rely upon me," she said.

Sarah, who was bringing in the lamp, gave them a stealthy glance as she placed it on the table, and she heard Mr. Graham answering—

"Yes, Lily, I know I can."

It was thus they parted.

"I have such a headache!" said Mrs. Scot,

uttering an exasperated sigh as she looked at Mrs. Petherick. "Poor William! I am so glad he was not drowned!" and being so glad, Mrs. Scot began to cry, for she saw that Lily was very pale, and that Mr. Graham had gone away long before his usual hour, and she really did not know how it would all end. "And Lily's wedding-day next Monday, and our trunks packed and all, and shall we ever go to England now?" was Mrs. Scot's lamentable but internal conclusion.

"And so that was William, was it?" remarked Mrs. Graham, who had been a silent witness of the brief but significant scene; then, with that awkward habit of speaking her thoughts aloud, she added—

"What a fine young man he has grown! Quite handsome! But don't you think, Lily, he should have written to tell you he was alive?"

Lily did not answer; but Mrs. Petherick said, in her cheerful way—

"I have no doubt he wrote, Mrs. Graham, and that the letter was lost."

"I have such a headache!" said Mrs. Scot again.

Mrs. Petherick took the hint, all the more willingly that there was nothing more to learn; and advising her dear Mrs. Scot to go to bed early, she rose, and left the family to their own reflections. Lily at once put her work away and went upstairs. Mrs. Graham looked after her.

"Do you know," said she, rubbing her nose, and again speaking with her incorrigible frankness—"do you know, I am afraid Lily may be making a sad mistake. Now, suppose she is still fond of William; ought she——"

"Still fond of William!" almost screamed Mrs. Scot, clasping her hands in amazement and indignation. "My dear friend, what do you mean? Was she ever fond of him, poor boy? She agreed to marry him because he worried her into it. Indeed, we all teased her, I am sorry to say. But first love, Mrs. Graham—first love! Oh, there is nothing like it after all!"

"I suppose so," answered Mrs. Graham, absently. "I think," she added, "that I will go and see how poor little Lily Bertram is going on. Mrs. Petherick's account has made me miserable."

No sooner had the door closed upon her than Mrs. Scot burst into tears.

"Mark my words," said she, addressing her two daughters, when she could speak, "Lily will never be Mr. Graham's wife. That unfortunate boy has come and undone us all. Heaven knows," added the poor lady, "I do not wish that he had stayed at the bottom of the sea; but, oh! if he had not come back before next Tuesday, what a blessing it would have been."

When Mr. Graham left Mrs. Scot's sitting-room, Sarah Webster, who had lingered in the room, went out too, saying, with some eagerness:

"I'll open the door for you, sir."

But once they were both under the archway her manner altered.

"Oh! sir," she said, in a low, impressive tone, "will you let me say a few words to you before you go—just a few words?"

Her sunken dark eyes glittered, her sallow cheeks were flushed, her thin, nervous frame quivered with strange excitement. Mr. Graham had often watched this woman, and wondered at the smothered fire that seemed to be ever burning within her. He now looked at her

curiously. He felt so wearied and so cold, how could she be so eager and so impassioned.

"What is it?" he asked, with his hand on the lock of the old gate.

"Oh! sir, not here, if you please," said Sarah, opening the dining-room door, and looking at him beseechingly.

A cold, surprised, and rather haughty look, was Mr. Graham's answer; but he remembered that this woman had reared Lily Scot, and he yielded to the invitation. He entered the dining-room, where a light was burning on the table, and Sarah quickly followed, and closed the door after her.

"Oh! sir," she said, breathlessly, "don't you go and believe a word of it. I know how they will all try to poison you against my dear young lady, just out of jealousy, because they say you are so rich; but don't you believe it—only you take her away, when you are married, keep her travelling and gay like, and it will all be right, sir."

She had put her two hands on the table, and leaned forward to look at him, with mingled imperiousness and entreaty. What strange energy there was in her, again thought Mr.

Graham, and how terribly clear it was to him that this marriage of his with Lily Scot was the life and death of the family. He had guessed as much already, but Sarah Webster put it before him in her vulgar ardour with cruel plainness.

"Well," he said, wearily, "what next, Sarah?"

Before she could answer, the door opened, and Lily appeared on the threshold of the room. She had heard a sound of voices as she was going upstairs, and she had come to see who was within.

Sarah could not repress a guilty start, and Mr. Graham's gravity was significant. For a few moments Lily stood looking at them both, pale, silent, and motionless; then, with her quiet dignity, she said,

"My mother wants her sago, Sarah." And Sarah, quailing beneath her young mistress's look, left the room without a word. Lily walked straight up to Mr. Graham.

"Well," said she, rather excitedly, and trying to laugh, her calm manner all gone, "what were you doing here with Sarah, Mr. Graham? Was she reversing the positions, and giving me a character?"

"Lily!" and he held out his hand and drew her towards him, and looked down in her face.

"You may look at me," she said, quickly and proudly. "I am not afraid."

"Poor Lily!" he half sighed. The hand he held trembled within his, the eyes he was gazing into opened wide, then closed their weary lids. "Poor Lily!" he said again, and stooping, he kissed her, and in that kiss his first love died at last, and for ever.

What passed after this? Lily never knew. Perhaps nothing passed. She was shivering in every limb, and sank down on the nearest chair. When she looked around her by the dull light of the candle burning on the table, she saw that she was alone and that Mr. Graham was gone.

CHAPTER XVII.

UP the street, far into the lonely country, went Mr. Graham in the deepening twilight. The land lay flat around the little Norman town; soft, dark clouds drooped down to the edge of the low horizon, and seemed to enclose all things for the long, calm slumbers of the night. The evening was grey and chill; but its cool breath was still tender. No penetrating keenness abode in those white mists which floated over the dark green of the pastures or the pale patches of the yellow stubble. They rose slow, insidious perhaps, but fair and gentle, from the bosom of the earth, and seemed to greet the lonely man, who left behind him the dwellings of his fellow men to seek their companionship.

Not untruly has Nature been named the great mother. Mother like, she calls us, and

though we heed her not, she waits, and bides her hour patient and eternal. She knows that in sorrow and calamity and abandonment that hour will surely come. She is ever ready to forgive our ingratitude, to welcome us back, her prodigal children, and to lure us to her society with a thousand tender wiles. The clouds in the sky, the shrill voice of the wind, the moaning of the sea, the ripple of unseen waters, the cool shadow of forest trees, the very grasses beneath our feet, all have a language which sounds sweeter than music to ears wearied by the speech and falsehood of man.

Edward Graham did not feel wronged or betrayed as he left the little Norman town behind him ; but he felt very wearied. It seemed to him that he had been tossing on the shores of life for more years than he could reckon, and that rest, any rest, would be welcome at last. Once before he had felt thus, and he had sought for the repose he wanted with Lily ; but Lily had never loved him, never—not even when he first saw her sweet face. He had been a desirable lover then, as he had been now, and that was all. He was not angry with her now that he recognised this truth. No jealousy of

William Lennard was in his heart; he could imagine him Lily's husband, and that heart feel no quicker throb at the thought. "It must have been very long ago that I loved her," was his sad inevitable conclusion. "I wonder if we had married next Monday how we should have got on? As others do, I suppose. A little cold—a little tired of each other, till children bound us more closely to the home life, and time strengthened the bond of our companionship, or death broke it for ever. Poor Lily! I do not think she would have rejoiced over my grave, yet if she found herself still young and free could she have helped thinking of him? I suppose not. There are feelings which no power can control, which are a part of our being, and they must either yield to the decay of time or abide with us to the bitter end." And so speculating on the present and the past, and looking at the possibilities of things, as if he were a stranger to all that had happened and might happen yet, he went along the high road, turning neither right nor left until it was night, and the mists cleared away, and the stars came out and glittered coldly in the darkness of the sky. He looked up at them vague-

ly, as if he wondered who and what they were, for personal thought was drifting from him, and it was mechanically that he at length turned his back on the lonely country. Little by little the sights and sounds of life met him as he walked on, The lights of Saint Aubin shone before him. A watch-dog barked in a distant farmyard, a church clock struck the hour far away, and a peasant sitting sideways on his tired horse rode slowly by and uttered his courteous *bon soir*, as he turned into a side path.

"*Bon soir,*" mechanically answered Edward Graham, and he wondered who the man was, and to what sort of a home he and his horse were going. Indeed he was ever wondering in this dull mood of his. Everything was so strange, so old, and yet so new. As he passed by the Asile where he had once seen the old men and women and Sister Martha, he stopped to look at it. Was it the other day that he had been there with Lily, or was it years? The door was ajar, and an old man was stumbling in. Mr. Graham caught sight of a Sister's white cap, and the gentle though reproving voice which said, "Late again, Père Vincent," sounded like Sister Martha's.

"I went to ask," the old man answered.

"Well?"

"Oh, so bad—so bad!"

The door closed, and Mr. Graham walked on. What, or perhaps who was it that was so bad? He had not solved the question by the time he reached the late Mr. Bertram's house. There, too, he stopped, and looked, and sighed. Poor little Lily!—was she really dying? He did not think of the young beauty, love of whom had so short a time ago been his fierce torment, but of Mr. Bertram's little daughter, with her tangled hair and her laughing eyes, and it seemed a pity that such a child should die. "Poor little Lily!" he thought again. He was passing on, when the carved gate opened, and a man came out into the street. Mr. Graham knew him at once—it was Richard Cowper. A thrill—the memory of his old hatred—passed through him as he saw that pale face and fair beard in the gaslight; then it subsided into a dead calm. Even that was gone.

"Ah! good evening," said Mr. Cowper, with unusual gravity of aspect.

"Good evening," answered Edward Graham, walking on.

Mr. Cowper walked by his side.

"You know she is given up?" he said, in a low tone. He looked sad, and even gloomy.

"Given up!" echoed Edward Graham slowly —"that seems hard."

He spoke in a cold, mechanical voice, almost as if he did not know what he was saying.

"Yes, poor young thing, it is hard. Such a lovely girl! Some die, and some come back to life. Is it true that William Lennard has turned up?"

"I saw him an hour ago," answered Mr. Graham.

Mr. Cowper laughed, but he looked ill at ease.

"Why did he not write all this time?" said he, gnawing his fair moustache. "Uncle always said he would halve it between us. I counted upon it. I came to this hole of a place for that —I—I contracted liabilities even on the faith of Mr. Lennard's promise. Mr. Lennard thought him dead, and so did I. It is not fair to the living for the dead to appear again in that startling fashion, is it?"

"No," echoed Mr. Graham, "it is not fair."

"Does not put you out, I hope?" hinted Mr. Cowper.

"Oh, no," answered Edward Graham, "it does not put me out."

They had long passed Mrs. Scot's house, and had reached the church of St. Anne. Its deep gates lay steeped in shadow, but the light of a young moon gently touched the wonderful carving, clear and dainty as lace, which rose above them.

"Going in there?" said Mr. Cowper, in a surprised tone, as he saw his companion suddenly stand still.

Yes, Mr. Graham was going in there, and with a cold "good night," he parted from Mr. Cowper.

The church was lonely. A light burning before the altar lit it dimly. Edward Graham sank listlessly down on one of the benches, and, too inert for prayer, he let his soul fold its weary wings in the Divine Presence, like a bird of passage, who, worn by its long flight, had come to rest there awhile. He looked at the altar, where Lily Scot was to have stood by his side, and though he thought that she might soon stand there, a pale fair bride, by the side of William Lennard, the thought woke nothing in his heart. It did not even wound that sense

of jealous pride which is almost the last feeling to die within us. William Lennard's look of hate, Mr. Cowper's all but open taunt, left him as cold, as dull. What did it matter—what did anything matter now? The present and the future were both a dreary blank, and the past—what was the past?

Heavily, wearily he looked back upon his life, and laid it under that searching Eye—oh! well for us that it is so merciful!—to which our weaknesses, our follies, and our sins are all revealed; and as he uttered his *meâ culpâ* in that sad hour, the Eternal Light that saw through him so clearly seemed suddenly poured over the track of all his days. He saw now what he had never seen before, that a feeling of hate, indulged in from youth upwards, had warped his whole destiny. He had indulged in it, cherished it, hugged it close, and sacrificed almost all things to that abiding resentment of an early wrong. How small, how miserable, how pitiable it seemed now! A dying man is said to cast a look of mingled wonder and shame on the errors of his life. Their aspect is so different from that which they wore when they came to tempt him in the dangerous

strength of his manhood. Was it for this he sinned?—was it for that he went through the fiery glow of passion, or let the cold waters of despair sweep over him? And a great trouble is so far like death, that it causes us to look upon life with altered eyes. The shore we once stood on wears a changed aspect when we turn back and gaze at it drifting down the troubled stream, that ends in the sadness of death.

What was Richard Cowper, Mr. Graham now asked of himself, that he should have lavished upon him so deep and long a scorn, and in that scorn put so much of the vital energy needed for nobler feelings and purer emotions? The man had not seemed worth it as they walked side by side a few minutes ago. The man who could talk of her death and his liabilities, and the loss of Mr. Lennard's inheritance, almost in one breath —what was he? And oh! misery, misery! he saw it as if it were written in lines of fire; it was to this feeling that every other feeling in his life had been made subject, on this base altar that its loveliness, its tenderness and beauty, had been slain. And now, where was the remedy? Hate was dead, true, but in its grave lay buried the promises of life, love, and hope; and no *resurgam*

could he ever write on that pitiless tombstone.

For some time the organist had been practising in the gallery above the church-door. The low, uncertain notes had floated through the quiet building with vague melody, but now the unseen musician suddenly struck into a dirge which sounded like the requiem of Edward Graham's past life, and pierced his very heart with grief. In this same church he had once cried over his hard lot with a young man's just and natural sorrow, and burying his face in his hands he now wept over the fatal sin of his life —the sin which had blighted his manhood.

Suddenly he started and rose. A little bell was tinkling. A priest, bearing the holy *Ciborium* under a canopy, lights, and choristers moved past him and left the church. He followed mechanically out into the moonlit street, and went bareheaded after the little procession, till it reached the door of Mr. Bertram's house. Two women walked by his side, and one of them said to the other: "It is a pity; she was a pretty girl."

A great sickening came over him as he heard her. As he walked down the street, back to the Cité de Jérusalem, the black old houses

on either side, and the church-steeples, and the moon in the sky all reeled before him. He had battled long, but the blow had fallen at last. She was dying, and he loved her. Yes, Mr. Graham was ill and stricken. Yes, he was very ill indeed, and the next morning, whilst the weary watchers stood around Lily's bed, wondering how many hours she would live, Mrs. Graham was crying by her nephew's bedside, and a doctor was shaking his head over him, and saying ominously, "Fever, madame—fever, and a bad case—a bad case, but we will hope."

CHAPTER XVIII.

IT was a bad case and a slow one. Weary days were those that followed—days of watching for Mrs. Graham; of pain, unrest, and delirium for the sick man, in which the one glimpse of consciousness that he possessed seemed only given to him that he might go through a keener agony than that which had laid him low. It came to him one morning when the sun shone in at his window, turning the faded curtains of his bed into burning orange, and lighting the sad face of his aunt as she bent forward to close the shutters.

"Aunt," he said in a low, distinct voice.

"Oh! Edward," she cried, turning round quickly, "do you know me?" and she came towards him with eager joy.

"Yes, aunt," he answered, very calmly, "I know you. You have something to tell me, have you not?"

Mrs. Graham turned pale and looked scared.

"No, no," said she, clasping her hands, "not yet, Ned, not yet."

"Give it to me," he said, holding out his wasted hand, and looking eagerly at her.

"But, Ned, it is not time for your medicine," she argued.

"I do not mean the medicine, aunt, and you know it. I mean the will—her will. Give it to me."

He held out his hand again.

"Ned, I have no will."

"You cannot deceive me, aunt. I was awake when they brought it to you—you put it in that drawer," and he pointed to an old-fashioned *commode.* "It is in a long yellow envelope, with a black seal. Give it to me, aunt, I am sensible now, and I want to read her will."

"Ned, I dare not."

"You must, auntie, you must."

He half rose as he spoke.

"Do not—do not," she entreated, and she went and opened the drawer and took out the yellow envelope and put it in his hand.

It was directed to himself. How pitiless and clear the letters of every word stood before his

eyes as they were there written in the formal legal hand. He broke the seal, unfolded the enclosure, and tried to read, but his sight was weak and dim, and it was only here and there that he could catch a few words. They were more than sufficient.

"This is my last will and testament." Then he saw his name, "Edward Graham;" then came the bequest, "My house in Saint Aubin, known as the Field of the Cloth of Gold;" then his heart failed him. He uttered a great cry of anguish: "Dead! dead! dead!" and he saw and knew nothing more till he woke again to life many days later, calm, weak, and broken.

The first feeling that returned with consciousness was that he had been far away, and that it had all happened long ago. He also felt very feeble. He saw his aunt's kind face smiling through her tears, he saw her forefinger raised warningly, and he obeyed the sign aud was silent till, with returning life, slowly but surely as the blood that flowed still languidly in his veins, came back the last cry of grief which had been on his lips: "Dead! dead! dead!"

"Oh! don't, Ned—pray don't!" cried his aunt, beseechingly—"don't begin again!"

"Where is the will?" he asked.

"I will give it to you presently," she answered, tearfully; "but pray don't begin again."

He groaned aloud. Then it was true—he had not dreamed it. She was dead, dead in her grave, with the heavy earth above her bright face.

"Tell me all about it," he said, looking at his aunt.

"Pray do not ask," she answered, her tears flowing—"I cannot, Ned—not yet—not yet. Indeed I cannot!"

He was silent, and put no more questions. Where was the need? He knew all—he knew too much. His illness had been a long one, but his recovery was rapid. His vigorous constitution enabled him to pass swiftly from disease to convalescence, and he was soon allowed to get up and sit in the arm-chair for half an hour every day.

"Do not let him talk much," the doctor had said; "but try to interest him in bits of news or little gossip, if you can. Above all things, do not excite him."

Kind Mrs. Graham did her best.

"Everyone has been inquiring about you," she said one day, after settling him comfortably in his chair.

He was silent.

"Perhaps you would like to know?" she pursued.

Still he spake not.

"Mrs. Scot came every day before they left, and—and they did not leave till you were out of danger."

No sign of emotion appeared on Mr. Graham's pale face. Mrs. Graham was relieved to find that he took this broad hint of Lily's departure so little to heart; but she also felt disappointed that he should be so passive under the news. She tried something else.

"Would you believe it, Ned, they say Captain Jekyll is going to marry Mrs. Petherick?"

Mr. Graham heard her with unmoved gravity.

"Oh! Ned," she could not help saying, in a voice full of sorrow, "will you never smile again?"

"I daresay not," he answered; "but what matter? one can live without smiling, you know."

Poor Mrs. Graham looked very doleful. She

had had her sorrows, but she could still smile.

"I wish I could interest you in something," she said, rather plaintively.

His sunken eyes lit.

"Tell me," he began.

"No! no!" cried Mrs. Graham, raising her hands and looking alarmed; "not that, Ned. The doctor has forbidden it. Not yet," she added, entreatingly—"later you can know all, but not now."

He yielded. He seemed too inert to insist. He leaned back in his chair, shaded his eyes with his hand, and half-closed his weary lids. Every day he slept so for a few minutes, and his aunt, thinking that he was sleeping, now softly moved away. But Mr. Graham was not sleeping. He sat with his back to the window and his face to the door. He looked at that door and remembered how he had felt the last time he crossed its threshold. She was dying, and he knew it, and that knowledge, and not, as the doctor said, the chill mist of a September evening, had poisoned his blood—that knowledge, and the long battle of wrath and injured love, and the proud man's struggle against them both, had laid him low. His poor

aunt! How pitiful and disconsolate she looked as she stood there at the further end of the room, gazing at him. She did not know, she could not understand; the time when she could do either was over, and she now saw the past through the dimness of age, with perplexed wonder in her kind face. He closed his eyes, not to sleep, but to think, also not to meet the look of her gentle, reproachful eyes.

"And so you are dead, my darling," he thought, "dead and buried. You so young are gone, and I must stay behind, and feel strong, and live years and years after you! Your pretty blooming face has vanished, and you loved me! And I was blind, blind with hate and jealousy, and never saw it till now, when it is too late for ever. What shall I do with your house, my darling? Shall I live in it, to be haunted by the step of your little feet on the stairs, by your bright face at every door and window? Ah! no; not without you—not without you. Let that house be closed for ever, and be as the grave of love, since you are gone."

"Ned," softly whispered Mrs. Graham, "are you asleep?"

He did not answer. He could not. He felt

that his voice would assuredly fail him if he made the attempt. Mrs. Graham, thinking him asleep, as usual, moved away softly on tip-toe, and went to the door. She opened it gently and cautiously, till he felt the draught from the stairs on his face; then, after a pause, a murmur of voices followed. Was he asleep, or dreaming?

"How is he?" asked a low voice.

"Much the same," answered Mrs. Graham, in tones equally low.

With a wild thrill of joy at his heart he opened his eyes and looked. The door stood ajar, and in the opening Lily Bertram's blooming face was gazing in at him. Their eyes met, and at once the bright vision vanished.

"Lily!—Lily!" he cried, starting up to his feet.

"Edward, what is it?" said Mrs. Graham, turning round, and hurrying up to him. "What is it, Ned? And, oh! pray don't!" she added, entreatingly.

"Lily, where are you?" he cried, without heeding her. "Lily, living or dead, come to me."

The door opened very softly and very little.

In the slit a smiling and tearful face peeped in, then vanished, then came again; then the door opened wider, and Lily slipped in like a bird getting out of its cage, and stood before him.

"Not dead, but living, Mr. Graham," said she.

"Oh! my dear," cried Mrs. Graham, wringing her hands, "what will the doctor say?"

They did not heed her. They looked at each other with clasped hands and happy tearful eyes; they were indeed far beyond the region where doctors and their decrees are heeded,

And joy, or rather the surprise of joy, which the doctor had dreaded, did not kill Mr. Graham. There was a shock, and a severe one, but no real relapse. Mrs. Graham, who hated what she called make-believe, was much relieved at the discovery.

"And you are not angry with me, Ned?" said she, pathetically. "But you had got hold of the unfortuate idea that dear Lily was dead, and had made her will, and there was no getting it out of you, and the doctor said I was to wait till you were strong enough to bear it; and so she came and peeped in at you, and

you found it all out." And then, with her incorrigible frankness, "I suppose you will build the turret now?" added she.

Of course Mr. Graham built the turret, and of course it stands there now, a memorial of the bitter past, and a sign of the happy present!

THE END.

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